15 take oath as new US citizens. PAGE 2
Christmas Parade of Lights on Saturday. PAGE 7

Hafa Adai!

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Torres, NMBAC in back-to-back meetings in DC

By BEA CABRERA
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REPORTER

Gov. Ralph DLG Torres and Northern Marianas Business Alliance Corp. officers and board members are currently in Washington, D.C. to meet with members of U.S. Congress and federal agencies to emphasize the enormous impact of ending the CNMI-Only Transitional Worker program on the CNMI economy and the importance of securing visa-free tourism in the CNMI.

The meeting with the U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources gave Torres and NMBAC the opportunity to give a detailed report to committee chair Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-AK) of the efforts that the private sector had made toward recruiting, hiring, and training U.S.-eligible workers in the CNMI.

The business community and employ-

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'Govt should push for premium processing'

By BEA CABRERA
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REPORTER

King

A CNMI lawyer believes the government and the business community should work on existing U.S. immigration laws to salvage the workforce needed in the CNMI before the CNMI-Only Transitional Worker program expires in Dec. 20, 2019.

According to attorney Janet King,

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$24M bill prioritizes PSS, CHCC, land compensation payments

By ERWIN ENCINARES
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REPORTER

A bill that provides supplemental funds to key agencies in the CNMI was filed yesterday during the House of Representatives' session on Capital Hill, with much of the over $24 million collected from the Saipan casino going to the Public School System and the Commonwealth Healthcare Corp.

Rep. Angel A. Demapan (R-Saipan) filed yesterday a still unnumbered bill that seeks to allocate over $24 million to key agencies in the CNMI.

The actual casino-licensee gross revenue tax, or CGRT, collection totals $38.5 million. However, only $16.5 million

See $24M on Page 4

Tillerson softens US stance on possible talks with N. Korea

By MATTHEW PENNINGTON
ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON (AP)— Secretary of State Rex Tillerson on Tuesday softened America's stance on possible talks with North Korea, calling it "unrealistic" to expect the nuclear-armed country to come to the table ready to give up a weapons of mass destruction program that it invested so much in developing. Tillerson said his boss, President Donald Trump, endorses this position.

Tillerson's remarks came two weeks after North Korea conducted a test with a missile that could potentially

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HELPING THE VICTIM BEA CABRERA
The second day of the Sexual Assault Forensic Examiner Training that will run until Friday at the SandsCastle of the Hyatt Regency Saipan is led by Dr. Linda Ledray. This training is for cases of sexual assault and the use forensic examination.

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Imperial Pacific participates in career-readiness programs.
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In a stunning victory, Democrat Doug Jones wins over Roy Moore.
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Rian Johnson's "The Last Jedi" is a welcome disturbance in the Force.
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Local

Fifteen swore allegiance to the United States of America yesterday at the NMI District Court as new U.S. citizens.

KIMBERLY A. BAUTISTA

15 take oath as new US citizens

By KIMBERLY A. BAUTISTA
Kimberly_bautista@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Fifteen persons were sworn in yesterday at the U.S. District Court as new U.S citizens.

The new citizens—who originated from the Philippines, South Korea, and China—swore their allegiance to the United States of America and were welcomed by Veterans of Foreign Wars Saipan Post 3457 commander Brad Ruszala.

This was Ruszala's first time to speak at a naturalization ceremony. He said it was a great honor. To prepare his speech, Ruszala dug into his family's history. "That was something I felt really happy to be able to share with everybody," he said.

Ruszala said his great-grandparents migrated to the United States about 100 years ago to chase the American dream. Ruszala's great-grandparents were of Polish, Hungarian, English, and Native American ancestry. "You've got a lot in common with my great grandparents. You've found the courage to leave your homeland in search of something new, something better," he said. "Your new duties and responsibilities as Americans also begin today. You are now citizens of the wealthiest, most powerful, and most influential nation mankind has ever known."

According to new citizen Milagros Ordonez, who has been on Saipan for nearly 35 years, she was still in shock, but said it felt amazing to finally be a U.S. citizen, something that she has been waiting for five years. "I feel nervous, I feel happy, and it's just so amazing," she said.

Ordonez's son, Arthur Mieron, was present during the ceremony to support his mother and is extremely grateful that his mother now has all the privileges that come with being a citizen.

"I am just so grateful that she gets to be a U.S. citizen just like me and get to enjoy what America can give her," he said.

The rest of the new U.S. citizens are Arcelia Alcantara, Danilo Alcantara, Amorzolita Borja, Alejandro Bricia, Florencia Gacutan, Suying Jin, Kee Hyun Kang, In Yung Lee, Kwong Hung Leung, Guangchao Li, Jinwen Ma, Myra Sison, and Merarcy Templado.

COTA completes fixed route bus stop assessment

The Commonwealth Office of Transit Authority recently completed its site assessment for the 112 bus stops for Route 1A and 1B of its planned fixed route transportation system, with construction of concrete pads and the installation of bus stop signs currently underway.

Route 1A will start in Garapan and will loop around Coral Tree Ave. (Hotel Street) along Micro Beach toward the Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. It then flows out onto Chalan Pale Arnold Road (Middle Road), through the intersection turning left onto Chalan Mgsr. Guerrero Road, then turning right onto Tun Antonio Apa Road leading to the Northern Marianas College campus and will circle back the same way it started.

For a link to the Route 1A map, visit:

https://platform.remix.com/map/a8d35af/line/38ee39a?latlng=15.18721,145.76214,z13&dir=0

Route 1B will begin at Paseo de Marianas on Beach Road, then heads south passing through the Saipan Northern Islands Leadership Memorial and the U.S. Postal Services. It then moves back toward Beach Road, going south toward the Pacific Islands Club, through Koblerville passing by the Tototville Estate, then heads east along Chalan Mgsr. Martinez Road passing by the Nutritional Assistance Program office in As Lito. It then flows through As Lito Road to the Shell Dandan gas station, then heads west along Chalan Msgr. Guerrero Road, passing by the Joeten Dandan Commercial Center toward the NMC intersection traffic light leading into the campus, and returns back to the starting point of Route 1B.

» Construction underway

For a link to the Route 1B map, visit:

https://platform.remix.com/map/a8d35af/line/30f64f2?latlng=15.18721,145.76214,z13&dir=0

The project was completed with the collaboration of the Department of Public Works and 3K Corp.

Diego B. Songsong, COTA community planner and Title VI coordinator, underscored the importance of the location of every bus stop along the route.

"We recognized the importance of the bus stop locations as they will be the point of contact between the passenger and the COTA transit service. Each bus stop location's functional and performance-related concerns is addressed in order to achieve the proposed Saipan Public Transit Fixed Route System's overall goal of providing timely, safe, and convenient transportation for the community. We are so pleased that we have reached the construction milestone in preparation of the actual implementation of the fixed route system," Songsong said.

Alfreda P. Camacho, the special assistant for public transportation, said this is just the latest of several milestones for COTA, all leading up to the rollout of the route in 2018.

"This is an exciting time for COTA as we continue to push through to expand our services and get this fixed route system up and running for the people of our Commonwealth. Thank you to the hardworking staff of DPW and its Federal Highway Office for their time and partnership to ensure that this project is completed accordingly," Camacho added.

Gov. Ralph DLG Torres noted that COTA's movement over the last several months has been very significant and reaffirms the administration's commitment to an efficient and effective public transportation system for the Commonwealth.

"COTA has been making great strides in its planning and development and is inching closer to having a fixed route system with a fleet of buses moving throughout the island. Access to transportation is the one of the most important factors in an individual's ability to escape poverty and seek out more economic opportunities like finding a job or attending a class. We will continue to make sure this vision of having a full-fledged transit system becomes a reality within 2018," Torres said.

This project was awarded to 3K Corp. for $118,856.00 on July 31, 2017 and is funded in whole by grant funds from the Federal Transit Administration through the U.S. Department of Transportation. ***(COTA)***

NMHC hosts 1st fair housing, accessibility training

By KIMBERLY A. BAUTISTA
kimberly_bautista@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Northern Marianas Housing Corp. hosted the islands' first fair housing and accessibility training that ended yesterday and certified approximately 90 individuals.

According to NMHC executive director Jesse Palacios, two trainers from the U.S. mainland were brought to Saipan to educate the public about fair housing and the importance of housing accessibility "like the rights you have as a landlord and your rights as a tenant so we don't discriminate."

Palacios said the topic of fair housing and accessibility is not frequently discussed in the Commonwealth and it needs to be addressed because of its growing population and continuous development.

"With the increase in economic development, there will be more companies, more businesses and these businesses will be needing more employees so we'll need more housing," he said.

Palacios hopes that through this training, discrimination of landlords can be addressed and if they are not aware that they are discriminating, the training helps shed light on what exactly discrimination is when it comes to housing.

Palacios said the training gained the participation of many from the public, lawyers, government agencies like the Northern Marianas Protection and Advocacy Systems Inc., Zoning, Department of Public Works, and many private developers.

Guest trainer Mark English is president of E&A Team Inc., which he started 25 years ago. The company specializes in accessibility inspections, accessibility blueprint and housing plan reviews, accessibility construction inspections, and inspection on existing structures and multi-family housing, and inspection of commercial facilities for the Americans with Disabilities Act.

English said that accessible housing is not only important for people with disabilities, but it is also valuable for those who suffer from terminal illnesses, and for the elderly.

"Starting in 2011, 10,000 people a day are turning 65 years old and that is going to happen everyday all the way until the year 2030 and, as we get older, we tend to need more accessibility to things," he said.

English said he wants to instill in his trainees some of the best practices to ensure affordable and accessibility housing on Saipan.

"We explained some best practices, kind of a take-away because Saipan, from everything I can see, is on the verge of exploding with growth and there is going to be a lot of new housing built here," he said.

The best practices English shared with his trainees were to have plans for housing development reviewed by an accessibility consultant; have an accessibility construction inspection; and have one more accessibility inspection once the building is fully completed.

Scott P. Moore of Baird Holm LLP also did a presentation on accessible housing during the fair housing and accessibility training.

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TILLERSON

From Page 1

carry a nuclear warhead to the U.S. Eastern Seaboard—a milestone in its decades-long drive to pose an atomic threat to its American adversary that Trump has vowed to prevent, using military force if necessary.

"We are ready to talk anytime North Korea would like to talk. And we are ready to have the first meeting without preconditions," Tillerson said at the Atlantic Council think tank.

He said that the North would need to hold off on its weapons testing. This year, the North has conducted more than 20 ballistic missile launches and one nuclear test explosion, its most powerful yet.

"Let's just meet and we can talk about the weather if you want to. We can talk about whether it's a square table or a round table if that's what you are excited about," Tillerson said. "But can we at least sit down and see each other face to face and then we can begin to lay out a map, a road map, of what we might be willing to work towards."

Although Tillerson said the goal of U.S. policy remained denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, he added it was "not realistic to say we're only going to talk if you come to the table ready to give up your program. They've too much invested in it. The president is very realistic about that as well."

Baik Tae-hyun, spokesman of Seoul's Unification Ministry, said of Tillerson's comments that Seoul wishes for talks to "happen soon" if they contribute to the goal of finding a peaceful solution for the North Korean nuclear problem.

He said Washington and Seoul both maintain a firm stance that North Korea's nuclear weapons cannot be tolerated and should be completely discarded in a peaceful way.

White House spokeswoman Sarah Huckabee Sanders said in a statement later Tuesday that: "The President's views on North Korea have not changed."

"North Korea is acting in an unsafe way not only toward Japan, China, and South Korea, but the entire world. North Korea's actions are not good for anyone and certainly not good for North Korea," she said.

In public, Trump has been less sanguine about the possibilities of diplomacy with Kim Jong Un's authoritarian government, which faces growing international isolation and sanctions as it pursues nuclear weapons in defiance of multiple U.N. Security Council resolutions. In October, Trump appeared to undercut Tillerson when he said he was "wasting his time" trying to negotiate with the North Korea, just as Tillerson said the U.S. had backchannel communications with the North.

Trump, who has traded insults with Kim, kept up his tough talk on Tuesday. As he signed a $700 billion defense authorization bill that includes additional spending on missile defense, he referred to North Korea as a "vile dictatorship."

"We're working very diligently on that—building up forces. We'll see how it all turns out. It's a very bad situation—a situation that should have been handled long ago by other administrations," Trump said.

Tillerson did not indicate that North Korea had signaled a new readiness to talk, but said that "they clearly understand that if we're going to talk, we've got to have a period of quiet" in weapons tests.

Tillerson stressed that the U.S. would not accept a nuclear-armed North Korea, as it flouts international norms and might spread weapons technology to non-state groups in ways that other nuclear powers have not.

In a rare admission of discussion of a highly sensitive topic, Tillerson said Washington has discussed with Beijing how North Korea's nuclear weapons might be secured in case of instability there.

"The most important thing to us would be securing those nuclear weapons that they have already developed and ensuring that nothing falls into the hands of people who we would not want to have it. We've had conversations with the Chinese about how that might be done," Tillerson said.

It appeared to the first public recognition from an administration official that the U.S. has discussed North Korean contingencies with China, which fought with the North against the U.S. in the 1950-53 Korean War. The Trump administration has held a series of high-level dialogues with Beijing this year, and U.S. and Chinese generals held rare talks in late November about how the two militaries might communicate in a crisis although U.S. officials said the dialogue wasn't centered on North Korea.

Tillerson said that the U.S. has assured China that in the event that American troops had to cross northward of the demilitarized zone separating the two Koreas, it would retreat back south once stability returned.

"That is our commitment we made to them. Our only objective is to denuclearize the Korean Peninsula, and that is all," Tillerson said.

Daryl Kimball, executive director of the Arms Control Association, said Tillerson's proposal for direct talks with North Korea without preconditions was overdue and a welcome shift in position, but both sides needed to demonstrate restraint.

"For North Korea that means a halt to all nuclear and ballistic missile tests, and for the United States, refraining from military maneuvers and overflights that appear to be practice runs for an attack on the North," Kimball said. "If such restraint is not forthcoming, we can expect a further escalation of tensions and a growing risk of a catastrophic war."

TORRES

From Page 1

ers carry the burden of proof in showing Congress that the CNMI is doing its part to recruit, hire, and retain U.S. eligible workers.

The U.S. Senate has the impression that the CNMI has made very little effort to recruit non-CW-1 workers

In an interview last July, NMBAC board member Marian Aldan-Pierce said it is of utmost importance to show efforts to recruit non-CW-1 workers. "We cannot only say it; we have to prove it," she said.

During the meeting, NMBAC member Gloria Cavanagh seized the opportunity to present a report to federal officials and the senior counsel of the Senate committee to inform them of the years of serious effort the local business community has taken to recruit and train U.S. workers and the large-scale unemployment of these same U.S. workers if the program is ended in 2019.

She said the report is their effort to provide accurate and available data to ensure policy regarding the critical CW program is based on facts and the true needs of the people of the CNMI.

Torres discussed the framework of potential policies in CNMI Labor, the continued inclusion of substantive policy discussions regarding the CNMI, and the extent in which the CNMI's foreign worker population contributes to jobs for U.S. citizens.

Meeting with U.S. House of Representatives and Delegate Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan (Ind-MP), NMBAC chair Alex Sablan said this is the time to build as many bridges as possible.

"Today's meetings gave us the perfect opportunity to address our concerns for the future of the CNMI economy and to lay out the facts and figures that, without a presence of foreign workers, U.S. citizens will lose their jobs to an equal proportion," he said.

"I never stated that Delegate Sablan refused to work with us, despite media reports, because we need all the assistance to protect our economy that we can get and today we made a big step toward building the necessary support for our islands," he added.

Alex Sablan said that the outcome of the meeting calls for members of the private sector to work together more than ever.

"We need to continue to document and compile all of our efforts to recruit U.S. workers and seek out alternative visas for existing CW permit holders who are eligible to apply," he said.

"The private sector and our government have made historic investments in our local workforce, and it is critical that we all work together to showcase this effort to members of Congress," he added.

The senior counsel of the Senate committee reiterated Murkowski's commitment to introduce and pass legislation that will address the long-term workforce challenges facing the CNMI.

Meeting with House Resources and Department of Defense

Torres and the NMBAC met with the staff from the House Natural Resources Committee and staff from the personal office of committee chair Rob Bishop (R-UT 1st District).

After hearing the reports of NMBAC officer and board members Alex Sablan, Gloria Cavanagh, and Perry Inos Jr., the House staffers expressed surprise that H.R. 339 was being interpreted by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services "in such a narrow fashion." They committed to work with Torres and NMBAC on a long-term solution to the CNMI's labor issues.

Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Allison Sands met with Torres and the NMBAC and the former talked about updates on the divert airfield project on Tinian and expressed deep understanding of the workforce issues in the CNMI and reiterated the U.S. Department of Defense's continued commitment to help support a long-term solution.

$24M

From Page 1

would be used for actual allocations since Public Law 20-10 sets aside $22 million of the CGRT in order to address the CNMI government's obligations to retiree pensions. An additional $7 million will come from leftovers of previous appropriations that were not appropriated, according to Demapan.

He said that 50 percent of over $24 million would be allocated to PSS, which he said in a previous statement is entitled to 25 percent of "general funds" due to a constitutional mandate.

In an interview yesterday, Demapan said at least $12 million goes to PSS while about $3.25 million would be allocated to the CHCC. He said PSS, CHCC, and CNMI land compensation debts gained priority in the appropriation but other programs were funded as well.

According to Demapan, CNMI land compensation debts would amount to about $3 million.

"We owe PSS from those two legislations (P.L. 20-04, which addressed major land compensation debts of the CNMI, and P.L. 20-16, which addressed the salaries of employees previously stuck at Step 12 during the financial austerity measures in the early 2000s), so the House Ways and Means Committee made sure that we paid that in the next round of supplemental budget [appropriation]," he said. Demapan chairs the committee.

House Speaker Rafael Demapan (R-Saipan) yesterday referred the bill to the Ways and Means Committee and asked the committee towork on the bill before the holidays.

GOVT

From Page 1

Gov. Ralph DLG Torres and Delegate Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan (Ind-MP) must work with the existing U.S. immigration framework.

"Our representatives should push for premium processing of U.S. visa applications from the CNMI for H1B, H2B, EB2, EB3, and other visa categories for the next two years to soften the effects of the end of the CW program and should the CNMI attempt to go through the U.S. Congress and submit a bill that amends the sunset provision of Public Law 110-229 to extend beyond Dec. 31, 2019, or pass a new law recreating the CW-1 program," she said.

King said that pushing for premium processing of U.S. visa applications is more likely to succeed as "it focuses on what we need now."

"This solution is also in line with the intent of the CW-1 program's temporal limits as it was always meant to be a temporary solution to give businesses [time] to move to U.S. visas," she added.

On the business side, King said that employers can prepare to work on preparing and filing U.S. visas for their employees before Dec. 29, 2019, while the government and business community is working with Congress to have the program extended beyond 2019.

King said there are different visa categories available to employers.

"A construction company that wishes to hire foreign workers to perform one-time, seasonal, non-agricultural work can consider H-2B visas. Under this visa category, upon completion of the temporary work, the foreign worker returns to his or her home country," she said.

"On the other hand, for employers with professional staff with a bachelor's degree or its equivalent, such as accountants and engineers and who are employed in a specialty occupation related to their field of study, they can consider the H-1B visa for their foreign employees," she added.

King pointed out that there is currently no cap for H-1B visas from the CNMI. This can benefit CNMI employers now; after Dec. 31, 2019, any H-1Bs from the CNMI will be subject to a nationwide 65,000 per year cap.

"Therefore, CNMI employers should file H-1B visas for their employees now and not later. For employers with workers who are professionals or skilled workers but do not have a bachelor's and master's degree such as tour operators, bus drivers, cooks, administrative staff, sales staff and the like, they can consider the EB-3 visa," she said.

"Of course, employers should consult an experienced immigration lawyer to discuss the requirements and filing procedures for the full range of available U.S. visas," she added.

Given that there are only two years left until the CW program ends, King said that CNMI representatives should push for deferred action, on a case-by-case basis, for foreign workers in the CNMI who are lawfully present and waiting for their U.S. visas to process so they can remain in the CNMI until their U.S. visas are adjudicated.

"This will allow businesses to move away from filing CW-1 petitions because, once deferred action is granted, the individual may apply for employment authorization for the duration of their deferred action," she said.

"If the U.S. visa is denied, the foreign worker returns to his or her home country but if the U.S. visa is granted, the foreign worker remains in the CNMI to work," she added.

Kilili pushes college access for CNMI, A. Samoa students

WASHINGTON, D.C.— During a committee drafting session on the Higher Education Act yesterday, Delegate Gregorio Kilili Camacho Sablan (Ind-MP) proposed creating a federal program to help pay for the last two years of college for graduates of Northern Marianas College or American Samoa Community College.

Sablan made the case that the Northern Marianas and American Samoa are the only U.S. jurisdictions without a four-year public college, where students may complete a baccalaureate degree. He compared his proposal to the program for students from the District of Columbia, who receive federal assistance to pay in-state tuition at public colleges and universities anywhere in the United States.

Two Republicans voted with all Democrats on the House Education and the Workforce Committee, but the Sablan amendment was narrowly defeated, 19-20.

"Education continues to be my No. 1 priority in Congress," Sablan said. "And the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act now underway provides me the opportunity to help make college more affordable for students from the Marianas."

"I want to thank my Republican friends, Duncan Hunter of California and Dr. Phil Roe of Tennessee, for voting with me on my amendment. Even though we were not successful in committee, we can still bring this up again in the Rules Committee and when the bill comes to the floor for a vote."

The Higher Education Act was last reauthorized in 2008, before Sablan was elected to Congress.

He had been working in the run-up to yesterday's session to have his four-year college proposal incorporated into the Republican base bill. But, even though his proposal would have also helped American Samoan students, represented in Congress by Republican Amata Aumua Coleman Radewagen (R-AS), the Republican-led committee was unwilling to add a new program and new costs.

So Sablan offered his plan as an amendment yesterday. "Nonresident students spend an average of $14,480 more per year in out-of-state tuition and fees than their resident peers at public four-year colleges, according to the College Board," Sablan explained.

"Students in the Marianas and American Samoa wanting to attend a four-year school after getting their community college degree not only face the cost of nonresident tuition, but also the significant expense of travel. The Marianas are over 3,700 miles from the nearest state, Hawaii—a $1,100 one-way trip by plane."

Democratic member Donald Norcross of New Jersey compared the situation for island students to the "food deserts" that people in some urban areas face. "A four-year college desert," he called it. "The fact that there is little, if any, opportunity to pursue within a reasonable cost a quality education, four-year program… I think [Sablan's proposal] is a cost-effective, good idea."

Also supporting the Sablan amendment were the committee's ranking member, Bobby Scott of Virginia, and Rep. Mark Takano (D-California).

"For far too long our country has neglected and marginalized the needs of its Pacific islands and territories on an array of policy issues," Takano told the committee. "And as the Education Task Force chair for the Congressional Asian-Pacific American Caucus, I know that education is no exception. Today, 43 percent of all native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders only have a high school diploma or less."

Sablan was successful at amending the federal funding formula for elementary and secondary education on the islands in December 2015. That formula distributes money every year to schools with students from low-income families. This year the CNMI Public School System received approximately $4.5 million over and above its usual grant as a result of Sablan's amendment.

Sablan was also an original cosponsor of the 2009 legislation that made more Marianas students eligible for Pell grants to attend college, and increased the dollar amount of the annual Pell grant. As a result, most U.S. students are now able to attend the Northern Marianas College for free.

Getting help for Marianas students who want to go beyond NMC has long been a goal of the Marianas delegate. In both the 111th and 112th congresses, he introduced legislation similar to the amendment he offered yesterday to the Higher Education Act. ***(PR)***

Delegate Gregorio Kilili Camacho Sablan (Ind-MP) wants to use federal funds to make up the difference between in-state and out-of-state tuition for graduates of Northern Marianas College going on to attend a four-year public university elsewhere in the United States. His proposal was voted down yesterday by the Republican majority during work on the Higher Education Act by the Education and the Workforce Committee in the U.S. House of Representatives.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Imperial Pacific paves the way for career growth

From left,: Kassandra Marquez, Jake Maratita, Talia Trianna, Bertha Leon Guerrero, Justine Rain Kirby, Julie Anne Loong, and Renee Acosta gather for a group photo outside of Imperial Pacific International's Compliance and Legal office, following the completion of the job-shadowing portion of the recently-held Career Exploration Day hosted by the Saipan Chamber of Commerce.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Imperial Pacific International's Learning and Development manager Renee Acosta speak with students of the Northern Marianas Trades Institute during the school's bi-annual Career Talk event on campus on Nov. 16, 2017.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Imperial Pacific International Ltd. continues to commit to the economic growth and development of the islands.

Imperial Pacific's Learning and Development recently participated in three events that were designed to assist college- and career-readiness of the islands' high school students and graduates.

IPI's Learning and Development participated in Career Talk, which was hosted by the Northern Marianas Trades Institute, the Start Smart seminar presented by the Northern Marianas College, and the Career Exploration Day for high school students organized by the Saipan Chamber of Commerce.

The Career Talk at NMTI resulted in three of their hospitality students joining the internship program of IPI.

Imperial Pacific International's Learning and Development assistant manager Hazel Tang, center, shares her career experiences and educational background to the students from various high schools around the island during the Start Smart seminar.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

During the banquet ceremony of the Career Exploration Day hosted by Saipan Chamber of Commerce on Dec. 6, 2017, Imperial Pacific International's staff gather with Justine Rain Kirby, Talia Trianna, and Julie Anne Loong, seated, left to right.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

IPI believes it is important for students in the community to be given the opportunity to see and experience the leisure and entertainment industry.

The Start Smart seminar, a pioneering initiative of NMC, was attended by more than 200 high school students. This was intended to prepare them for higher education and college-career opportunities, among others.

IPI's Learning and Development personnel spoke to over 200 participants about working in the industry and the many great career and growth opportunities available within IPI.

At the same time, students joining the Career Exploration Day were given the opportunity to shadow IPI executives and managers. This afforded every intern the hands-on experience of the day-to-day operations within IPI. Interns were also given tasks to accomplish

IPI is the largest private sector employer in the CNMI. ***(PR)***

Imperial Pacific International's assistant director of Compliance Jake Maratita, left, works with Talia Trianna and Justine Rain Kirby during the Saipan Chamber of Commerce's Career Exploration Day on Dec. 6.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Imperial Pacific International's Learning and Development assistant managers Kassandra Marquez and Hazel Tang, center, pose with students from various high schools during the two-day Start Smart seminar on Dec. 4, 2017.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Water outage on Dec. 15 in Kagman

There will be a water service interruption on Dec. 15, 2017, in Kagman, from 9am to 1pm to repair a water leak between JCT Market and the KG2 well. This will take approximately four hours to complete. The outage will affect customers residing along the KG131 well/chlorine station from Kagman Road, Santa Soledad Church, up to the Kumoi booster station and residents near the Juvenile Detention Center to Laulau. For more information, contact the Commonwealth Utilities Corp. Customer Call Center (664-4282) or monitor its Facebook page. ***(CUC)***

RCUOG meeting on Friday

The regular meeting of the Research Corporation of the University of Guam will be held Friday, Dec. 15, 2017, at 2:30pm in the president's conference room, executive offices, on the second floor of the Jesus S. and Eugenia A. Leon Guerrero School of Business and Public Administration Building. RCUOG complies with Guam Public Law 24-109 with reference to the provisions and requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. For assistance contact Joseph Gumataotao, UOG EEO Office, Room 106, Iya Hami, at 735-2244 or (TTY) 735-2243. ***(PR)***

Landfill, transfer station closed on Sat.

On Saturday, Dec. 16, 2017, both the Lower Base transfer station and the Marpi landfill waste disposal facilities will be closed at 3pm in preparation for the Department of Public Works' annual Christmas party. ***(PR)***

Water service interruption on Saipan

There will be a scheduled water service interruption today, Dec. 13, from 8am to 5pm, in several areas on Saipan to repair a leak in a 6-inch transmission line. The water outage will affect Koblerville, San Antonio, Chalan Kanoa, Susupe, San Jose, Oleai, Chalan Piao, As Lito and Fina Sisu areas. Customers in these areas should expect restoration of services soon thereafter. Repairs will be located on the corner of Guangdong Hardware in As Lito. ***(CUC)***

Survivors, caregivers support meeting on Dec. 14

All people facing cancer, their family members, and caregivers are invited to the Commonwealth Cancer Association support meeting on Thursday, Dec. 14, 2017, starting at 5:30pm at the Hyatt Regency Saipan's Chamolinian Room. Guest speaker will be Salome A. Castro of the Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. To RSVP or for more information, call the CCA at 682-0050 or email at ccamarianas@gmail.com. ***(PR)***

Military training at Warning Area 517, Farallon de Medinilla

ASAN, Guam—The U.S. military will conduct training at Warning Area 517 during the following dates and times:

- Dec. 13, from noon to 10pm.
- Dec. 14, from 8:30am to 10:30pm.

The military will also conduct training at the island of Farallon de Medinilla during the following dates and times:

- Dec. 12, from 8:30am to 6:30pm.
- Dec. 13, from noon to 10pm.
- Dec. 14, from 8:30am to 10:30pm.
- Dec. 15, from 10:30am to 3:30pm.

W-517 is activated south of latitude 12° 40' 00"N. Santa Rosa Reef and Galvez Banks are open for public use.

The general location of the training on the island of Farallon de Medinilla will be in a 12-nautical mile radius of the island. ***(PR)***

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
NORTHERN MARIANAS HOUSING CORPORATION
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PUBLIC NOTICE

(This Notice is paid by NMHC with HUD Funds.)

Governor Ralph DLG. Torres and Lt Governor Victor B. Hocog, and the Northern Marianas Housing Corporation (NMHC) Board of Directors, through its Chairman, Mr. Ignacio L. Perez, wish to announce that its Consolidated Annual Performance Report (CAPER) for Program Year 2016 is available for review. Comments made by the general public should be submitted no later than 4:30 p.m. on December 22, 2017. Written comments must be submitted to the NMHC Office in Garapan, Saipan, P. O. Box 500514, Saipan, MP 96950, or by contacting Ms. Zenie P. Mafnas, Deputy Corporate Director, at 234-9447/7689.

The report will be submitted to the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Honolulu Office, by December 31, 2017. The CAPER encompasses the performance assessment of all HUD-funded programs, administered by the Northern Marianas Housing Corporation, in the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands.

The report is available at the NMHC Central Office in Saipan and at the respective NMHC Field Offices in Rota and Tinian during regular business hours, Monday through Friday, except CNMI holidays. Individuals needing special accommodations to review and comment on the plan must contact the Planning Division for arrangements by calling (670) 234-7689/6866 during regular business hours.

Ignacio L. Perez
Chairman of the Board

PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY
COMMONWEALTH HEALTHCARE CORPORATION
REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)
RFP18-CHCC/KCHC-004

SUBMISSION DEADLINE: DECEMBER 22, 2017 TIME: 11:00AM

"HOUSE KEEPING SERVICES KAGMAN COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER, COMMONWEALTH HEALTHCARE CORPORATION"

COPIES OF THE RFP PACKET MAY BE PICKED –UP AT CHCC PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY DIVISION-MEDICAL SUPPLY STORAGE FACILITY LOWER BASE SAIPAN, DURING REGULAR WORKING HOURS.

THE CHCC RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY AND ALL PROPOSAL AND TO WAIVE ANY IMPERFECTIONS IN ANY PROPOSAL, IF TO DO SO SHALL BE IN THE INTEREST OF THE CHCC. ALL PROPOSALS SHALL BECOME THE EXCLUSIVE PROPERTY OF THE COMMONWEALTH HEALTHCARE CORPORATION.

/S/ ESTHER L. MUNA
CHCC CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

/S/ PRISCILLA M. IAKOPO
CHCC DIRECTOR OF P&S

Christmas Parade of Lights on Saturday

For a special holiday treat, the Marianas Visitors Authority and organizers of the Christmas in the Marianas celebration invite the public to the Christmas Parade of Lights on Saturday, Dec. 16, after sunset in Garapan.

The parade will begin at about 5:45pm from Garapan Fishing Base north on Beach Road to the American Memorial Park, featuring at least eight floats adorned with Christmas lights. A number of school marching units will also join the parade with Christmas costumes. Immediately following the parade, a Christmas costume catwalk contest will take place at Paseo de Marianas, followed by the announcement of winning schools for the Christmas tree decorating contest and caroling contest held earlier this month.

The monthlong Christmas in the Marianas celebration offers weekly holiday entertainment for visitors and residents from 5pm to 9pm and is organized by the MVA, PDM Promoters, Inc., Team PDI, and other travel partners. The event also includes food and beverage sales by various vendors.

"We invite everyone to come out and enjoy the unique and beautiful sunset Christmas Parade of Lights," said MVA Community Projects specialist and lead event organizer Lynn Sablan.

"Also, we are looking forward to awarding the schools on Saturday for all their enthusiastic participation in this year's celebration. It's going to be an exciting night!"

Dec. 23 will feature individual acts; interested musicians and performers may contact Sablan at 664-3200/01 to request to be scheduled.

The Japanese Mochitsuki Festival will be held on Dec. 30, marking the pounding of rice to make "mochi," a traditional event in preparation for the new year.

Participating schools are Oleai, Koblerville, Gregorio T. Camacho, Kagman, and San Vicente elementary schools; Hopwood, Tanapag, Dandan, and Chacha Ocean View middle schools; Kagman and Marianas high schools; Agape Christian School, Seventh Day Adventist School, Saipan Community School, Green Meadow School, Saipan International School, Northern Marianas International School, and Grace Christian Academy.

For more information on the event, contact Sablan at jsablan@mymarianas.com or 664.3210. ***(MVA)***

MVA

Students of Hopwood Middle School perform at Christmas in the Marianas on Dec. 2, 2017, at Paseo de Marianas.

WITH FESTIVE MENU ITEMS AND GIFT BASKETS

Great Harvest sweetens the holidays

Great Harvest Bread Co. of Saipan will offer holiday bread, goodies, gift baskets, and catering options throughout December.

Customers can find the perfect holiday gift for friends and family or help themselves to an assortment of treats to pair with a holiday meal.

The Asagio sourdough is back on the menu this season, made with asagio, cheddar, and extra virgin olive oil.

Great Harvest's goodie collection includes pumpkin chocolate chip muffins, pecan bars, banana walnut muffins, and more. Some of the bestselling treats available this season include the Chamorro sugar cookie and the traditional oversized chocolate chip cookie. The bakery-café will offer additional, exclusive seasonal menu items, including the ginger bop cookies and St. Nickerdoodles.

"The winter holiday season is the time of the year to spend time with your loved ones, and create delightful memories over delicious food and sweet treats," said Donovan Castro, Great Harvest baker. "We take pride in our handcrafted seasonal bread and desserts, and are honored to play a part in our customer's holiday gatherings."

The bakery-café will offer a selection of handmade gift baskets. The collection includes a pancake mix package, Cookie of the Day, biscotti and themed utensils.

Great Harvest will continue to serve breakfast, sandwiches, salads, and grain bowls throughout the day. ***(PR)***

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Math & English Placement Exam Dates:
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Hocog signs 3 bills into law; vetoes one

Acting governor Victor B. Hocog signed into law three House bills and one local budget bill for Rota and vetoed one on Monday, Dec. 11. The bills he enacted were House Bill 20-18, H.B. 20-22, H.B. 20-12, and House Local Bill 20-38. The lone bill he vetoed was H.B. 20-67.

H.B. 20-18 changes the hours of operations for shooting galleries and shooting ranges. Authored by Rep. Lorenzo I. Deleon Guerrero (Ind-Saipan), the legislation enacts amendments to the existing provisions regarding shooting galleries and shooting ranges so that the hours of operations do not affect residential homes within close proximity to the shooting range in Kannat Tabla. The amendment changes the hours of operations for shooting ranges from 11am to 11pm to 9am to 8pm. This bill becomes Public Law 20-29.

H.B. 20-22 clarifies the occupancy tax laws to ensure that bed and breakfast activities (e.g. AirBnB) are covered under the occupancy tax. Authored by Rep. Joseph Lee Pan T. Guerrero (R-Saipan), the legislation makes amendments to include bed-and-breakfast facilities within the occupancy tax law and adds new definitions to ensure proper regulation. This bill becomes P.L. 20-30.

H.B. 20-12 reforms drug sentencing laws to effectuate the rehabilitation and treatment principles of evidence-based sentencing. Authored by House Speaker Rafael S. Demapan (R-Saipan), the legislation makes amendments to existing criminal laws so that non-violent individuals convicted of a drug-related offense can have the opportunity to undergo treatment and rehabilitation services through the CNMI Drug Court, the Governor's Substance Abuse and Rehabilitation Program, and the Community Guidance Center. This bill becomes P.L. 20-31.

H.L.B. 20-38, D1 appropriates $522,189 out of the $2 million allocated to Rota under Public Law 18-56.

The appropriation is as follows:

■ $472,189.00 to pay the following: $268,189 to cover the shortfall of 26 municipal employees' salaries; $204,000 to cover the salaries of the same 26 municipal employees up to April 2018; $50,000 to pay for the medical subsistence allowance for dialysis patients for April and May 2017. This bill becomes Rota Local Law 20-07.

The vetoed bill, H.B. 20-67, sought to amend the law for the conservation and protection of sweet potato, known as *kamuti* in the local dialect.

In his veto message to the Legislature, Hocog said the intent of this bill is unclear, hence the veto.

"In this bill, the Legislature finds that 1 CMC Section 1402 (a) expressly lists areas within which a senatorial district may enact local laws, and that subsection (a) defined a local bill as a bill that "if enacted, becomes a law pertaining exclusively to matters within one senatorial district.

"Additionally, the Legislature expresses that this list includes the conservation of 'wildlife such as deer, fruit bats, or coconut crabs,' but fails to mention one of the most popular resources of the island of Rota, the…*kamuti*. Thus, the Legislature recommends that the the sweet potato, *kamuti*, should be added onto this list.

"…The particular intent of this legislation is unclear, therefore I must veto the bill until its intent is clarified. This bill references the Legislature's ability to make the necessary efforts to conserve wildlife, such as deer, fruit bats, and coconut crabs. In regards to the conservation of wildlife, such as deer, fruit bats and coconut crabs, the purpose of the protection of these threatened species is plain as these creatures are often hunted for consumption during on and off hunting seasons. The intent of the conservation of the sweet potato plant, however, despite being Rota's most popular resource, is ambiguous.

"Accordingly, until the objective of this bill is made clear, I must respectfully exercise my constitutional authority to veto H.B. 20-67." ***(PR)***

PIC honors two loyal guests

Pacific Islands Club Saipan is training its spotlight on two of its loyal guests, Chernyshev Iurii and Ivashchenko Galina, both from Russia, who have been coming to the islands every year for the last 10 years and find great pleasure in making PIC their second home.

Iurii, 80, a lawyer who has practiced criminal law for the past 50 years, has been coming to Saipan since 2008, once or twice a year, to get away from the cold winter in Russia.

"My wife and I come…and stay for more than a month, sometimes during different seasons but we definitely come here to avoid the cold winter season. There is no place like this in Russia," he said.

Iurii learned about Saipan through a travel agency and it was at the agency's advice that he and his wife came to Saipan.

"It was like a risk because we had no knowledge what Saipan is all about. We came and kept coming back," he said.

Iurri's wife passed away in August this year. Finding the courage to come back alone was hard but, he said, also inevitable.

"In Russia, we have a phrase that we really like to say: 'A small house in the countryside.' That means a small house in the village where you feel comfortable, a place where you can laugh and be with warm people and place," he said. "I treat PIC as that house and Saipan as the village where I find comfort, peace and happiness."

Making PIC his second home came naturally. Iurii said that nothing can match the special service he experiences every time he is on Saipan.

"It's not service but special care. PIC pays attention. They do not treat you as a customer but as a person. I feel the warmth and professionalism of the PIC staff and this makes a big difference," he said. "My day would be spent in the beach and an hour in the lazy river.

"I hope other Russians would come here and stay at PIC. I have a dream that all people from Russia, especially the ones with children, to come during the wintertime because Saipan is like no other place," he added.

From left, Anastacia Panchenko of Pacific Island Club, Chernyshev Iurii, and Ivashchenko Galina.
BEA CABRERA

Finding inspiration

Galina, a writer, said that Saipan always gives her inspiration. "Saipan always brings inspiration to me. I have been to Saipan, Rota, and Tinian and I have written stories about the history of Saipan, Rota, and Tinian in my books, titled *Island Saipan*," she added.

Galina only started writing when she turned 50. She recounts that she was always busy in her younger years. "I would write something and then set it aside. Finally, my time as a writer has come."

So far, she has already written three books. For this trip, she is working on her fourth.

Galina describes her experience of being on Saipan and staying at PIC as akin to feeling like a "bird."

"I live here like a bird because I am the 'on the wings of happiness,' so to speak. I always write my books here and when I am here, I forget all my problems, troubles and have a good rest on Saipan," she said.

Galina learned about Saipan through the recommendations of her friends.

"I came and began having short trips—10, 20, and now 45 days, maximizing my visa. I feel I belong here as I have many friends here who are not only Russians but locals as well," she said.

"I come when it is the beginning of winter in Russia. I fell in love with the weather and people here. I can describe the people and the island Saipan in just one word and that is "warm" and staying at PIC makes it warmer because I know everybody and everybody knows me."

Galina is set to go back to Russia on Dec. 25 after 45 days on island and plans to immediately return in January and stay at PIC.

"I will go back to Russia to finalize the stories and poems that I wrote here and have it published. But I am set to come back in January next year because paradise on earth is very limited and Saipan is one of them," she said.

"My stories and I come alive when I am here, that is why I come back as much as I can. I used to travel to many different places but now I just come to Saipan."

PIC is grateful

PIC is showing its appreciation to Iurii and Galina by honoring them this year since this is their 10th year of coming to Saipan and staying with the resort.

Anastasia Panchenko, PIC's sales & marketing assistant manager, said that PIC had robes made especially for the two, together with other special gifts to make their stay more memorable.

Pachenko said that whenever Iurii and Galina returns, it feels like homecoming for family members.

"The relationship has grown much deeper that we treat each other as friends. I was already working at PIC [in 2008] and knew them since they first came," she said `

"I am glad they feel at home at PIC and we always strive to be better in our service and personal care to returning customers. People like Mr. Iurii and Ms. Galina make our work here at PIC rewarding and they serve as an inspiration for us to be of better service so others will also find PIC their home away from home," she added. ***(Bea Cabrera)***

RED HORSE Demolition Team scheduled to conduct explosives training today

ANDERSEN AIR FORCE BASE, Guam—The 554th RED HORSE Squadron Demolition Team will be conducting explosives training from 7:30am to approximately 5pm today, Dec. 14, at Andersen Air Force Base, Guam.

Members of the public are advised the training may produce loud blast noises, but will be localized to the training area, with no anticipated effect outside of the cordoned space. Members of the public are advised that traffic is scheduled to close for 10-20 minute intervals around the quarry area on Route 3A, including outbound traffic at the Northwest Field gate, prior to each detonation.

The training is not open to public viewing. ***(PR)***

Ex-radio personality Travis Coffman dies, 50

Former radio talk show host Travis Coffman, who came to the Marianas more than 25 years ago to work as a broadcast journalist, was found dead in his Nimitz Hill home Tuesday, his former co-worker, Patti Arroyo, said Wednesday morning during her program on K57 radio.

Coffman was 50.

Arroyo said there are no details about what happened to him, but she noted Coffman had struggled with health issues in recent years.

In 2005, Coffman talked to the *Pacific Daily News* about his career, saying he was brought to Saipan in 1991 as a broadcast journalist by Saipan Cable TV. He signed on for Saipan, although he originally applied for a job on Guam, he said.

Coffman spent several years with Saipan Cable, a few years with Marianas Cable Vision, and worked for the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands governor's office.

He was married, with three children.

In Guam, Coffman subbed for Jon Anderson during his second week of work at K57 Radio,

Coffman, who has children with disabilities, \was one of the founding members of the nonprofit advocacy group, Autism Community Together. ***(PDN)***

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Opinion

Hafa Adai!
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EDITORIAL

Deficits for millionaires? No problem. But for sick kids, it's pay as you go.

Republican Congressional leaders have been so busy cutting taxes for rich people that they haven't gotten around to funding the Children's Health Insurance Program. It serves 8.9 million children nationwide and provides maternity care for about 370,000 women.

CHIP serves children in families that earn too much to qualify for traditional Medicaid but not enough to afford private insurance. In Missouri, families earning up to 300 percent of federal poverty guidelines ($5,040 a month for a family of three) are eligible; in Illinois, it's 200 percent. Families at the high end of income eligibility must pay cost-sharing premiums.

CHIP covers about 27,000 Missouri kids each month and about 88,000 at some point each year. Another 600,000 or so are covered by the federal-state Medicaid program. Only the CHIP kids are at risk because of congressional inaction.

The program, begun in 1997, is credited with helping cut the uninsured rate for children from 14 percent to 5 percent. Families can afford to take their kids to the doctor for preventive care, meaning that potential health problems are headed off before they become serious, making them less costly to treat when kids do get sick. The program is aimed at the working poor and has thus been popular with Republicans and Democrats alike.

Not this year. CHIP funding expired Sept. 30 as the program got caught up in squabbling over repealing the Affordable Care Act—though CHIP is an entirely separate program.

Since then Congress has been focused on tax cuts, though the House did pass a funding bill in early November loaded down with poison pills, such as stripping some Obamacare funding to pay for it. Congress is willing to go $1.5 trillion in debt for tax cuts to benefit corporations and rich people but can't find $70 billion to keep CHIP going for five years.

No child has lost care yet as federal officials have shuffled money between states to cover shortfalls. California, with 15 percent of the CHIP recipients, has said it will exhaust its funds by the end of December. Other states have begun preparing to wind down their programs should all funding dry up. Missouri officials say they can keep going through March.

As inept as Congress is, you'd think members could get together on something as vital as keeping children healthy. Those 8.9 million kids are going to have to make some serious campaign contributions.

(c)2017 *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*

Why California burns

By RICHARD HALSEY
LOS ANGELES TIMES

Large, high-intensity wildfires are an inevitable and natural part of life in California. The destruction of our communities is not. But many of the political leaders we elect and planning agencies we depend upon to create safe communities have failed us. They have allowed developers to build in harm's way, and left firefighters holding the bag.

The fires raging in Los Angeles County and Ventura are an urgent signal that we need to start asking the hard questions _ about the true cost of expanding the local tax base with new residences in high fire hazard zones. We need to stop having the same conversation over and over again, a conversation laced with non-sequiturs and focused on outdated, ineffective solutions. The devastating loss of life, the destruction of so many family homes, and the dangers faced by those who protect us demand nothing less.

Some blame the current rash of wildfires on dead trees in forests _ even if those fires are nowhere near a forest, or dead trees. (Members of Congress seem to have bought this explanation and they're now pushing a bill sponsored by Rep. Bruce Westerman (R-Ark.) that would encourage more logging in the West.) Some blame climate change, claiming, for example, that rising temperatures are responsible for the devastating Tubbs fire in Santa Rosa in October _ despite the fact that a bigger and just as fierce fire burned much of the same area in 1964. (Climate change is making our fire seasons worse, but it isn't responsible for every big fire.) Yet others blame firefighters for creating dense stands of chaparral in fire suppression efforts _ when that's the only way chaparral naturally grows, dense and impenetrable.

The standard procedure to reduce wildfire risk is to clear habitat. We have spent millions of dollars doing this for nearly a century. Nevertheless, our homes keep burning.

That's because while vegetation management such as fuel breaks and prescribed burns can help during non-extreme fire events, they do little to suppress extreme events. But if anyone questions vegetation management in the backcountry, the typical response is that the projects will work as designed for 90th percentile weather conditions. That's absurd. Imagine if we designed buildings to withstand only 95th percentile earthquake movements, or what you would feel as a result of a magnitude 2.5. We need to protect communities from fires that actually do the damage.

How do we do this? As University of Colorado geographer Gregory Simon has observed, since we are choosing to spread cities farther and farther out into wildland areas, we need to recognize that fire disasters aren't natural, they're social. And they require social solutions.

Planning agencies need to push back against pro-development forces in government, whose willingness to build in known fire corridors borders on criminal neglect. The recent devastation of the community of Fountaingrove in Santa Rosa, for example, was both horrible and predictable. (The area has now burned twice in 53 years.) Local leaders need to restrict development in such areas.

In the smaller picture, local governments need to impose strict fire codes in new communities throughout California, require older communities to retrofit their properties, and enforce proper defensible space regulations. That means 100 feet of thinned vegetation, not bare ground. Hundreds of feet of bare ground make a home the target for wind-driven embers.

Such policies would cost significantly less than the $9.4 billion wildfire-related claims submitted statewide as of Friday.

We also need to examine the best practices of other fire-prone regions. Communities in Australia often install external, under-eave/rooftop sprinklers, which have proven quite effective in protecting structures during wildfires. (Australians understand that wet homes do not ignite.) Such systems should be standard in all new developments in high fire hazard zones. It is likely they would have protected many of the homes consumed in Ventura's Thomas fire this week.

Agencies like Cal Fire need to begin addressing the question, "How do we protect lives and property?" rather than "How can we stop a wildfire?" Right now, Cal Fire is focused on the latter, with its misguided Vegetation Treatment Program. A focus on the former would mean at least noting land-use problems in planning documents. It would mean spending as much time and money on helping people retrofit homes as on vegetation treatments. Communities including Idyllwild and Big Bear have taken advantage of FEMA pre-disaster grants to replace flammable roofing and install ember-resistant vents. Such long-term solutions, unlike fuel breaks, do not require costly maintenance.

Trees, shrubs, grasses or homes will all provide the necessary fuel for a wildfire. It's part of California's story. As we do with earthquakes and floods, our goal should be to reduce the damage when wildfires arrive, not pretend we can prevent them from happening at all. That mindset starts at the planning department, not the fire station.

Richard Halsey is the director of the California Chaparral Institute.

EDITORIAL POLICY Letters to the editor must include the NAME, VILLAGE ADDRESS, and CONTACT NUMBER of the contributor. Letters that do not have these information will immediately be trashed. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

How pundits got ISIS wrong

By MAX ABRAHMS and JOHN GLASER
LOS ANGELES TIMES

The Islamic State is a shadow of its former self. In 2014, the extremist group seemed to make substantial inroads in achieving its stated goal of a caliphate. It boasted tens of thousands of fighters and territorial control over an area roughly the size of South Korea. By almost every metric, Islamic State has collapsed in its Syria stronghold, as well as in Iraq. As a former foreign fighter recently admitted, "It's over: There is no more Daesh left," using an Arabic acronym for Islamic State.

The rollback of Islamic State must come as a shock to the chorus of journalists and analysts who spent years insisting that such progress would never happen without toppling the regime of Bashar Assad _ which is, of course, still standing. A cavalcade of opinion makers long averred that Islamic State would thrive in Syria so long as Assad ruled because the Syrian Arab Army was part of the same disease.

John Bolton, former United Nations ambassador under George W. Bush, insisted in the New York Times that "defeating the Islamic State" is "neither feasible nor desirable" if Assad remains in power. Writing in the Wall Street Journal, Sens. John McCain and Lindsey Graham asserted that "defeating Islamic State also requires defeating Bashar Assad." Kenneth Pollack of the Brookings Institution prescribed a policy of "building a new Syrian opposition army capable of defeating both President Bashar al-Assad and the more militant Islamists." Similarly, Max Boot, a contributing writer to the Los Angeles Times, argued that vanquishing Islamic State was futile unless the U.S. also moved to depose the "Alawite regime in Damascus." Like other regime-change salesmen, he pitched a no-fly zone across the country to facilitate airstrikes against the Assad government, while boosting aid to the so-called moderate rebels.

Prominent Syria analysts also claimed that Assad supported, even sponsored Islamic State. CNN's Michael Weiss pushed the line that Assad and Russian President Vladimir Putin would not fight Islamic State and that Syria and Russia were the group's "unacknowledged air force." His co-author, Hassan Hassan, contended that the Syrian regime must go because "Assad has never fought (Islamic State) before."

For a while, everywhere one looked, the media was peddling the same narrative. The Daily Beast described Islamic State fighters as "Assad's henchmen." The New York Times promoted the idea that "Assad's forces" have been "aiding" Islamic State by "not only avoiding" the group "but actively seeking to bolster their position." Time parroted the pro-regime-change line that "Bashar Assad won't fight" Islamic State.

But these popular arguments were, to put it mildly, empirically challenged.

The case for regime change in Damascus was reminiscent of the one cooked up for Baghdad in 2003: Interventionists played on American fears by pretending that the strongmen were in direct cahoots with Salafi jihadists (the ultra-conservative movement within Sunni Islam). The evidence of Assad sponsoring Islamic State, however, was about as strong as for Saddam Hussein sponsoring Al Qaeda.

As the Syria expert Aymenn Jawad Al-Tamimi noted in February 2014, Islamic State "has a record of fighting the regime on multiple fronts, including the Sheikh Said area of Aleppo province, Kwiris military airbase (where an offensive is ongoing under the leadership of muhajireen battalion Suqur al-Izz, in coordination with the Green Battalion, (Islamic State) and Jabhat al-Nusra), Nubl and Zahara, Brigade 17 airbase in Raqqa province, Tabqa military airport, Qalamoun, Sayyida Zainab, Sakhna in Homs desert, the Qamishli area, and Latakia province. Besides these locations, one should also remember (Islamic State's) leading role in the capture of Mannagh airbase."

The notion that Assad "won't fight" Islamic State was always wrong. The notion that "defeating Islamic State also requires defeating Bashar Assad" was, likewise, always wrong. By now it should be obvious that the Syrian Arab Army has played a role in degrading Islamic State in Syria _ not alone, of course, but with Russian and Iranian partners, not to mention the impressive U.S.-led coalition. In marked contrast to pundit expectations, the group's demise was inversely related to Assad's power. Islamic State's fortunes decreased as his influence in the country increased.

Equally contrary to analyst predictions, the group imploded right after external support for the "moderate" rebels dried up. The weakening of the rebels was a major setback for Islamic State because Assad could finally focus his firepower on the group. Fewer weapon shipments into the theater, moreover, meant fewer arms fell into the hands of Salafi jihadists.

How strange, then, that we haven't heard many pundits acknowledge their mistakes; they're not itching to atone for having almost forced another regime-change mission based on discredited analysis.

The now-defunct conventional wisdom was not only stubbornly anti-empirical, but unmoored from the political science literature. With few exceptions, international relations scholars seemed content to stand back and watch think tank pundits do the day-to-day Syria analysis while ignoring the red flags dotting the research landscape.

Some of the best political science research over the past couple of decades finds that militants are less likely to emerge in response to political grievances than from propitious conditions for them to organize. For Islamic State, the "opportunity model" of terrorism was always a better fit than the "grievance model." After all, this is a group that set up shop in the desert, far away from the Syrian military; preyed on soft targets like the Yazidis who never oppressed the Sunni population; and planted affiliates in countries known not for their anti-Sunni government, but the lack of a functioning one.

As in Iraq a decade earlier, regime change in Syria would have created the ultimate power vacuum for Islamic State to flourish.

Moreover, the notion that pumping arms and fighters into Syria would mitigate the unrest is actually the opposite of what study after study has established. The conflict literature makes clear that external support for the opposition tends to exacerbate and extend civil wars, which usually peter out not through power-sharing agreements among fighting equals, but when one side _ typically, the incumbent _ achieves dominance.

The Realist paradigm reminds us that the U.S. need not share the same ideology of a nasty international actor to countenance working with him against a mutual foe. With its sensitivity to overspending and blowback, Realism also emphasizes the dangers of militarily picking foreign governments around the world.

Although the Islamic State's caliphate is dead, Assad's war on terrorists in Syria is very much alive. Let's hope future analysis of this conflict avoids the kind of anti-empirical ideological advocacy that helped give rise to al-Qaida in Iraq and then Islamic State in the first place.

*Max Abrahms is a professor of political science at Northeastern University and a term member of the Council on Foreign Relations. John Glaser is director of foreign policy studies at the Cato Institute. They wrote this for the L*os Angeles Times

The Christmas story for migrants

By BILL MEFFORD
Tribune News Service

Bill Mefford is a long time faith leader in the United Methodist Church and currently leads a grassroots faith collective, the Fig Tree Revolution.

The story of Jesus' birth and of how his wandering family finally found refuge in a barn, among animals and gathering shepherds, carries a strong message for the United States today.

It tells us that providing hospitality to those in need can bring unexpected blessings. It also reminds us of our values as members of faith communities.

Sadly, the Trump administration is tearing families apart and deporting immigrants who constitute absolutely no threat to their local communities. I have heard from immigrants directly about the high levels of fear they experience due to Trump's rhetoric and stepped-up enforcement of immigration laws.

While the number of deportations has declined since Trump took office, the number of people being arrested on immigration-related charges has soared. A recent study from the group Human Rights Watch found that immigration arrests in the interior of the country, as opposed to at the border, increased 42 percent in the first seven months of the Trump administration over the same period last year. Most disturbing is that the number of interior arrests of immigrants who have no criminal record has nearly tripled.

Many of these people are longtime U.S. residents with spouses and children who are U.S. citizens. They are valued members of churches throughout the land. In response, people of faith across the United States are springing into action to provide refuge to immigrants. Here are a few examples:

■ In the hurricane-ravaged areas of south Texas and Florida, faith communities are serving people in need, offering help especially to undocumented immigrants who are unable to qualify for government assistance because of their legal status.

■ Lawyers with Justice for Our Neighbors, a United Methodist ministry, have helped DACA-qualified students apply and renew their applications for DACA, worked to get refugees to apply for asylum, and sought to protect immigrants facing violence to apply for a specific visa so that they can remain legally in the United States. The group often works out of local churches in immigrant neighborhoods.

■ The sanctuary movement is growing steadily among faith communities as more and more houses of worship are taking in undocumented families and shielding them from arrest and deportation.

Although governments have broad discretion to regulate migration, they must also weigh the impact of deportations on the rights of immigrants. The U.S. immigration system in most cases gives no airing or weight to immigrants' ties to home and family. As members of our communities and congregations, Christians should demand that these rights be respected.

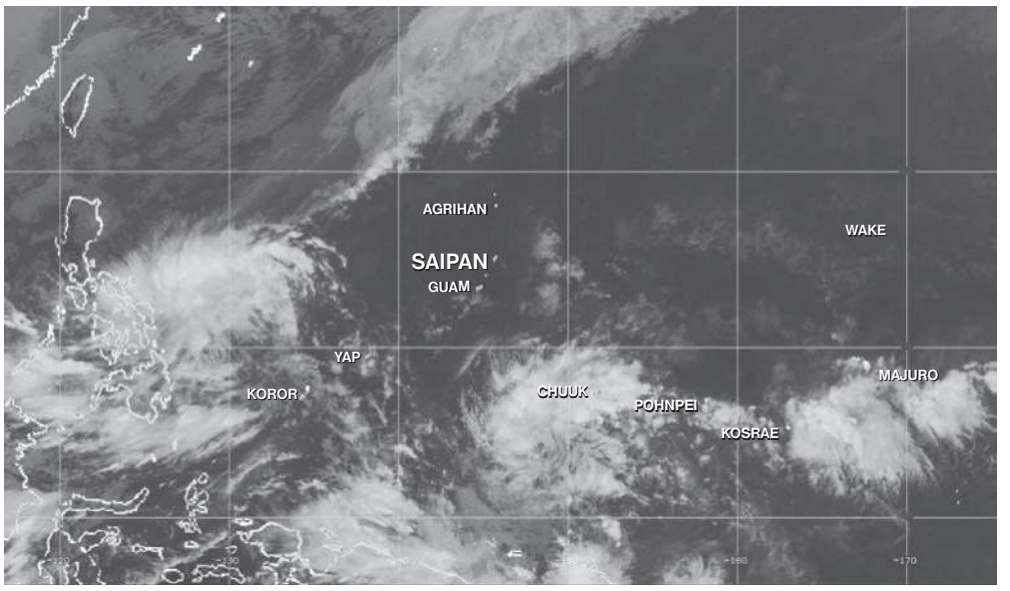
Thus, as Christians in this Advent season await the birthday of a baby who set about to set captives free, it is imperative for all Christians to resist the Trump administration's draconian policies toward immigrants. This is what Advent is all about.

The Weather

5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN

TODAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY
Mostly cloudy with isolated showers and thunderstorms. East winds 10 to 20 mph.	Mostly cloudy with isolated showers and thunderstorms. East winds 10 to 20 mph.	Mostly cloudy with isolated showers.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.
▲88° ▼77°	▲87° ▼77°	▲88° ▼77°	▲88° ▼78°	▲88° ▼78°

YESTERDAY'S SATELLITE IMAGE



PICTURE TIME: 8:02 AM, WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 13, 2017
Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

Trade-wind disturbance is expected to move through between Thursday night and Friday. This could trigger a few thunderstorms, however the portion north of 10N is not looking all that robust. This means the main story will be winds and seas, and they will not be changing much until the weekend. Saturday could begin to see fresh winds and 6 to 8 foot seas. If the forecast trend does materialize, Tuesday is about when we could be at risk of meeting small craft advisory criteria. Anybody planning any boat travel next week should keep informed of expected conditions. A high surf advisory is possible also next week.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

MICRONESIA		▲ ▼ °F
Guam and Rota	Thunderstorms	85° / 79°
Palau	Thunderstorms	85° / 79°
Yap	Thunderstorms	85° / 79°
Chuuk	Thunderstorms	85° / 80°
Pohnpei	Thunderstorms	86° / 78°
Kosrae	Thunderstorms	86° / 78°
Majuro	Thunderstorms	85° / 82°

AROUND THE GLOBE		▲ ▼ °F
Auckland	Partly Cloudy	43° / 36°
Beijing	Sunny	30° / 18°
Hong Kong	Cloudy	66° / 64°
Honolulu	Partly Cloudy	78° / 70°
London	Showers	46° / 37°
Los Angeles	Sunny	77° / 51
Manila	Partly Cloudy	84° / 72°
Melbourne	Sunny	77° / 55°
Miami	Sunny	70° / 63°
New York	Partly Cloudy	35° / 26°
Osaka	Partly Cloudy	50° / 37°
Paris	Showers	43° / 36°
Busan	Partly Cloudy	50° / 32°
Rome	Showers	55° / 54°
Salem	Sunny	58° / 36°
San Francisco	Sunny	62° / 46°
Seoul	Mostly Cloudy	37° / 19°
Tokyo	Cloudy	48° / 34°
Washington, DC	Partly Cloudy	39° / 29°

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- *11 on any IT&E cellular phone
- Log on to the internet at www.nmicrimestoppers.net

TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY		FEET
5:40 AM	HIGH TIDE	1.50
10:54 AM	LOW TIDE	0.91
4:44 PM	HIGH TIDE	1.92
-	-	-

DAY	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Today	6:34 AM	5:48 PM
Friday	6:34 AM	5:48 PM
Saturday	6:35 AM	5:49 PM
Sunday	6:36 AM	5:49 PM
Monday	6:36 AM	5:50 PM

DAY	MOONRISE	MOONSET	MOONRISE
Today	2:59 am	3:02 pm	-
Friday	3:48 am	3:42 pm	-
Saturday	4:37 am	4:24 pm	-
Sunday	5:26 am	5:08 pm	-
Monday	6:16 am	5:54 pm	-

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FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF NOVEMBER 6, 2017

DEPARTURES

SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)

UA6394	4:15am	5:05am	Daily
UA6392	8:40am	9:30am	Daily
UA6391	1:30pm	3:10pm	1, 4, 5, 7 via Rota
UA6390	2:20pm	3:10pm	2, 3, 6
UA6398	6:05pm	6:55pm	Daily
UA6396	9:50pm	10:40pm	Daily

SAIPAN-ROTA (ROP)

UA6391	1:30pm	2:05pm	1, 4, 5, 7

ROTA (ROP)-GUAM (GUM)

UA6391	2:35pm	3:10pm	1, 4, 5, 7

SAIPAN-NARITA (NRT)

DL297	4:15pm	7:05pm	Daily

SAIPAN-BUSAN (PUS)

7C3451	3:10am	6:10am	1, 7
7C3451	4:00am	7:05am	4, 5

SAIPAN-SEOUL (ICN)

TW308	2:00am	6:05am	2, 3, 4
OZ626	2:10am	6:00am	1
TW308	2:35am	6:20am	6, 7
OZ626	2:50am	6:40am	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
7C3403	4:45am	8:30am	Daily
LJ652	3:40am	7:30am	1, 4, 5, 7
7C3401	4:00pm	7:45pm	Daily

SAIPAN-SHANGHAI (PVG)

3U8648	6:10am	8:30am	1, 4, 5, 7

SAIPAN-HANGZHOU (HGH)

JD396	7:00am	10:25am	1
JD396	4:50pm	8:15pm	4

SAIPAN-NANJING (NKG)

XP889	4:45pm	10:30pm	3, 5, 7

SAIPAN-GUANGZHOU (CAN)

3U8646	4:20am	7:30am	2, 6

SAIPAN-BEIJING (PEK)

MU764	1:30am	6:35am	3, 5, 7

SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)

OZ626/701	2:10am	10:55am	1 via ICN
OZ626/701	2:50am	10:55am	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 via ICN
UA6394/191	4:15am	9:00am	2, 3, 6, 7 via GUM
UA6394/PR111	4:15am	8:10am	7 via GUM
UA6394/PR111	4:15am	9:20am	1, 3, 4, 6 via GUM
UA6398/183	6:05pm	9:40pm	2, 5 via GUM
UA6398/183	6:05pm	9:50pm	1, 3, 4, 6, 7 via GUM
UA6398/193	6:05pm	11:50pm	2, 5 via GUM-ROR

SAIPAN-HONG KONG (HKG)

HX077	2:00am	5:00am	1, 4
OZ626/721	2:10am	11:50am	1 via ICN
OZ626/721	2:50am	11:50am	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 via ICN
UO43	5:45am	8:40am	1, 3, 5, 7
UA6398/159	6:05pm	11:00pm	1, 3, 5, 6 via GUM

ARRIVALS

GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN

UA6393	2:45am	3:35am	Daily
UA6395	7:15am	8:05am	Daily
UA6391	12:10pm	1:00pm	1, 4, 5, 7
UA6390	12:10pm	1:50pm	2, 3, 6 via Rota
UA6397	4:45pm	5:35pm	Daily
UA6399	8:30pm	9:20pm	Daily

GUAM (GUM)-ROTA (ROP)

UA6390	12:10pm	12:45pm	2, 3, 6

ROTA (ROP)-SAIPAN

UA6390	1:15pm	1:50pm	2, 3, 6

NARITA (NRT)-SAIPAN

DL298	10:30am	3:00pm	Daily

BUSAN (PUS)-SAIPAN

7C3452	9:00pm	2:10am+1	4
7C3452	9:05pm	2:10am+1	3, 6, 7

SEOUL (ICN)-SAIPAN

7C3402	9:30am	3:00pm	Daily
TW307	7:45pm	1:00am+1	1, 2, 3
OZ625	7:40pm	1:00am+1	7
TW307	8:05pm	1:35am+1	5, 6
OZ625	8:20pm	1:40am+1	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
LJ651	9:10pm	2:40am+1	3, 4, 6, 7
7C3404	10:10pm	3:40am+1	Daily

SHANGHAI (PVG)-SAIPAN

3U8647	10:20pm	4:30am+1	3, 4, 6, 7

HANGZHOU (HGH)-SAIPAN

JD395	8:10am	3:30pm	4
JD395	10:05pm	5:30am+1	7

NANJING (NKG)-SAIPAN

XP888	9:35pm	4:00am+1	1, 4, 6

GUANGZHOU (CAN)-SAIPAN

3U8645	7:40pm	3:00am+1	1, 5

BEIJING (PEK)-SAIPAN

MU763	4:25pm	12:30am+1	2, 4, 6

MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN

UA182/6395	12:40am	8:05am	3, 6 via GUM
UA190/6397	9:55am	5:35pm	2, 3, 6, 7 via GUM
OZ702/625	12:30pm	1:00am+1	7 via ICN
OZ702/625	12:30pm	1:40am+1	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 via ICN
PR110/UA6395	10:05pm	8:05am+1	2, 3, 5, 6, 7 via GUM
UA192/6395	10:30pm	8:05am+1	2, 5 via ROR-GUM
UA184/6395	10:55pm	8:05am+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7 via GUM

HONG KONG (HKG)-SAIPAN

OZ722/625	1:15pm	1:00am+1	7 via ICN
OZ722/625	1:15pm	1:40am+1	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 via ICN
HX076	5:20pm	12:30am+1	3, 7
UO42	6:50pm	1:45am+1	7
UO42	9:30pm	4:25am+1	2, 4, 6
UA116/6395	11:55pm	8:05am+1	1, 3, 5, 6 via GUM

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); 3U Sichuan Airlines, 7C Jeju Air, DL Delta Airlines, JD Beijing Capital, UO HK Express, HX HongKong Airlines, LJ Jin Air, MU China Eastern, OZ Asiana Airlines, TW t'way Air, UA United Airlines, PR PAL Express, XP XTRA Airways; ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. *(The* Saipan Tribune *is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)*

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SAIPAN TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
1301	7:30AM	8:00AM	Daily
1302	11:30AM	12:00PM	Daily
1303	4:00PM	4:30PM	Daily

ROTA TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
3101	8:15AM	8:45AM	Daily
3102	1:45PM	2:15PM	Daily
3103	4:45PM	5:15PM	Daily

ROTA TO GUAM

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
3401	12:15PM	12:45PM	Daily

GUAM TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
4301	1:00PM	1:30PM	Daily

SAIPAN TO TINIAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
1201	7:00AM	7:15AM	Daily
1202	8:00AM	8:15AM	Daily
1203	9:00AM	9:15AM	Daily
1204	10:00AM	10:15AM	Daily
1205	11:00AM	11:15AM	Daily
1206	12:00PM	12:15PM	Daily
1207	1:00PM	1:15PM	Daily
1208	2:00PM	2:15PM	Daily
1209	3:00PM	3:15PM	Daily
1210	4:00PM	4:15PM	Daily
1211	5:00PM	5:15PM	Daily
1212	6:00PM	6:15PM	Daily

TINIAN TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
2102	7:30AM	7:45AM	Daily
2103	8:30AM	8:45AM	Daily
2104	9:30AM	9:45AM	Daily
2105	10:30AM	10:45AM	Daily
2106	11:30AM	11:45AM	Daily
2107	12:30PM	12:45PM	Daily
2108	1:30PM	1:45PM	Daily
2109	2:30PM	2:45PM	Daily
2110	3:30PM	3:45PM	Daily
2111	4:30PM	4:45PM	Daily
2112	5:30PM	5:45PM	Daily
2113	6:30PM	6:45PM	Daily

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Business

Tax package would lower top tax rate for wealthy Americans

House or Senate tax plan: Which plan will give you better returns?

The Times analyzed 2016 tax returns submitted by readers to see how they would be affected by the House and Senate tax plans. With the help of accounting firm Marcum, we estimated how much more or less these two individuals and two families would have paid in federal income taxes had those plans been law in 2016.

	Filing: Single, renter **Income: $43,084**			Graduate student, renter **$30,531**			Married, two children, homeowners **$173,839**			Married, no children, renters **$216,715**		
Filer/s:	Dontrelle Nettles			Elizabeth Floyd			Maya Bader and Matthew Pratt			Anett Seifert and David Amejka		
Occupation:	Fashion retail product planner			Grad student and teaching assistant			Research grant manager, chemistry prof.			Aerospace account mgr.; automotive eng.		
Residence:	South Los Angeles			Santa Barbara			Redondo Beach			Sherman Oaks		
	2016 tax return	House	Senate	2016 tax return	House	Senate	2016 tax return	House	Senate	2016 tax return	House	Senate
Income	$43,084	$43,084	$43,084	$30,531	$42,807	$30,531	$173,839	$173,839	$173,839	$216,715	$216,715	$216,715
Exemption/ deductions	–$10,350	–$12,200	–$12,000	–$10,350	–$12,200	–$12,000	–$74,349	–$40,913	–$37,241	–$23,918	–$24,400	–$24,000
Taxable income	$32,734	$30,884	$31,084	$20,181	$30,607	$18,531	$99,490	$132,926	$136,598	$192,797	$192,315	$192,715
Tax credits	——	–$300	——	——	–$300	——	–$414	–$4,214	–$4,414	——	–$600	——
Top tax rate	15%	12%	12%	15%	12%	12%	25%	25%	22%	28%	25%	24%
Total federal taxes owed	$4,445	$3,406	$3,540	$2,569	$3,373	$2,033	$15,997	$17,318	$17,517	$40,946	$35,779	$35,331
Tax increase/ decrease	——	–$1,039	–$905	——	$804	–$536	——	$1,321	$1,520	——	–$5,167	–$5,615

Source: Sources: Times reporting, Marcum LLP
Graphic: Staff, TNS, Los Angeles Times

WASHINGTON (AP)—Congressional Republicans on Tuesday rushed toward a deal on a massive tax package that would reduce the top tax rate for wealthy Americans to 37 percent and slash the corporate rate to a level slightly higher than what businesses and conservatives wanted.

In a flurry of last-minute changes that could profoundly affect the pocketbooks of millions of Americans, House and Senate negotiators agreed to expand a deduction for state and local taxes to allow individuals to deduct income taxes as well as property taxes. The deduction is valuable to residents in high-tax states like New York, New Jersey and California.

Negotiators also agreed to set the corporate income tax rate at 21 percent, said two congressional aides who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to publicly discuss private negotiations. Both the House bill and the Senate bill would have lowered the corporate rate from 35 percent to 20 percent.

Business and conservative groups lobbied hard for the 20 percent corporate rate. Negotiators agreed to bump it up to 21 percent to help offset revenue losses from other tax breaks, the aides said.

As the final parameters of the bill took shape, negotiators agreed to cut the top tax rate for individuals from 39.6 percent to 37 percent in a windfall for the richest Americans. The reduction is certain to provide ammunition for Democrats who complain that the tax package is a massive giveaway to corporations and the rich.

Under current law, the top tax rate applies to income above $470,000 for married couples, though lawmakers are completely reworking the tax brackets.

Sen. Susan Collins, R-Maine, who has previously expressed opposition to reducing the rate for the wealthiest earners, acknowledged Tuesday that the negotiators appear to have agreed on the move. "I don't think lowering the top rate is a good idea," Collins said.

She didn't threaten to vote against the final bill, however, if it included a lower rate, saying "I'm going to wait and look at the entire conference report and see what all the provisions are."

Some of Facebook's early friends now its sharpest critics

NEW YORK (AP)—Some of Facebook's former friends are starting to express some serious doubts about the social network they helped create.

Facebook exploits a "vulnerability in human psychology" to addict its users, Sean Parker, the company's first president, said in a public forum last month. Chamath Palihapitiya, a former Facebook vice president who joined the company in 2007, recently told an audience at Stanford that the company is "ripping apart the social fabric of how society works."

And Roger McNamee, a venture capitalist and early investor in both Facebook and Google, wrote that both companies "threaten public health and democracy" in an August USA Today op-ed.

It has been a rough year for the tech industry, especially social media companies. It opened with concerns about fake news and "filter bubbles" that can shield people from contrary beliefs, segued into pressure on Facebook and Twitter to clamp down on trolling and online harassment, and culminated with congressional hearings into Russian agents' alleged use of their platforms to meddle with the 2016 presidential election.

All of that, of course, came against a steady drumbeat of tweets from President Donald Trump, who used the service to praise his allies and castigate his foes, often in inflammatory fashion.

But the unkindest cut of all may have come from three people who helped build Facebook in its early days. In early November, Parker told the news site Axios that Facebook was built to answer the question, "How do we consume as much of your time and conscious attention as possible?" He called its stream of comments, "likes" and reactions a "social validation feedback loop that exploits how human brains work."

A few days later, McNamee wrote another essay for the Guardian in which he argued that Facebook and Google have used "persuasive tech-

Paris hosts major climate summit—and it's all about Trump

PARIS (AP)—The global climate summit in Paris was designed to bypass Donald Trump, but the U.S. president ended up playing a starring role.

Trump became the unwitting villain as world leaders, investors and other Americans assailed him Tuesday for rejecting the Paris climate accord.

To emphasize their point—and prevent others from following his lead - they announced more than $1 billion in investments to make it easier for countries and industries to give up oil and coal.

French President Emmanuel Macron used the summit to seize the global spotlight, capitalizing on Trump's isolationist policies and German Chancellor Angela Merkel's domestic weakness to position himself as the world's moral compass on climate change.

"We're not moving fast enough," Macron said, warning that the 2015 Paris climate accord is "fragile."

"It's time to act and move faster and win this battle" against climate change, he told the more than 50 world leaders and others gathered in Paris.

After opening the summit on a pessimistic note, Macron was more encouraging at the closing, praising the "very concrete" commitments made by the participants.

"We started today to make up some ground in this battlefield," he said in his closing speech. Today's commitments will be able to be tracked and verified on a dedicated platform, he added.

Bill Gates, Richard Branson and other energy executives and investment fund leaders announced a dozen international projects emerging from the summit that will inject money into efforts to curb climate change.

World Bank President Jim Yong Kim won rousing applause when he announced that his agency would stop financing oil and gas projects in two years.

STOCK PORTFOLIO

LEADING INDICATORS

DOW	S&P	NASDAQ
24,504.80	2,664.11	6,862.32
+118.7	+4.12	-12.76
+0.49%	+0.15%	-0.19%

EXCHANGE RATES

In U.S. dollar terms

Australian Dollar	1.3211	Hong Kong Dollar	7.8057	Russian Ruble	59.2089
British Pound	0.7505	Indian Rupee	64.6481	Singapore Dollar	1.3517
Canadian Dollar	1.2846	Japanese Yen	113.2070	South Korean Won	1065.71
Chinese Yuan	6.4958	Malaysian Ringgit	4.0270	Swiss Franc	0.9899
Euro	0.8506	New Zealand Dollar	1.4387	Taiwan Dollar	29.4547
		Philippine Peso	49.4978	Thailand Baht	32.5375

Nation

Jones wins in stunning Alabama upset

MONTGOMERY, Ala. (AP)—In a stunning victory aided by scandal, Democrat Doug Jones won Alabama's special Senate election on Tuesday, beating back history, an embattled Republican opponent and President Donald Trump, who urgently endorsed GOP rebel Roy Moore despite a litany of sexual misconduct allegations.

It was the first Democratic Senate victory in a quarter-century in Alabama, one of the reddest of red states, and proved anew that party loyalty is anything but sure in the age of Trump. It was a major embarrassment for the president and a fresh wound for the nation's already divided Republican Party.

The victory by Jones, a former U.S. attorney best known for prosecuting two Ku Klux Klansmen responsible for Birmingham's infamous 1963 church bombing, narrows the GOP advantage in the U.S. Senate to 51-49. That imperils already-uncertain Republican tax, budget and health proposals and injects tremendous energy into the Democratic Party's early push to reclaim House and Senate majorities in 2018.

Still, many Washington Republicans viewed the defeat of Moore as perhaps the best outcome for the party nationally despite the short-term sting. The fiery Christian conservative's positions have alienated women, racial minorities, gays and Muslims—in addition to the multiple allegations that he was guilty of sexual misconduct with teens, one only 14, when he was in his 30s.

In this Tuesday, Dec. 12, 2017, photo, Democratic candidate for U.S. Senate Doug Jones speaks to reporters after voting in Mountain Brook, Ala. AP

A number of Republicans declined to support him, including Alabama's long-serving Sen. Richard Shelby. But Trump lent his name and the national GOP's resources to Moore's campaign in recent days.

Had Moore won, the GOP would have been saddled with a colleague accused of sordid conduct as Republicans nationwide struggle with Trump's historically low popularity. Senate leaders had promised that Moore would have faced an immediate ethics investigation.

Jones takes over the seat previously held by Attorney General Jeff Sessions. The term expires in January of 2021.

Republicans on Capitol Hill have expressed hopes of scheduling a vote on their tax legislation before Jones is sworn in, but lawmakers are still struggling to devise a compromise bill to bridge the divide between the House and Senate legislation that can win majority support in both chambers.

The Republican loss also gives Democrats a clearer path to a Senate majority in 2018—albeit a narrow one—in an election cycle where Democrats are far more optimistic about seizing control of the House of Representatives.

Ultimately, Tuesday's contest came down to which side better motivated its supporters to vote. Alabama Secretary of State John Merrill said turnout likely would not exceed 25 percent of registered voters.

Jones successfully fought to cobble together an unlikely coalition of African-Americans, liberal whites and moderate Republicans.

"This is an important time in Alabama's history, and we feel very confident where we are and how this is going to turn out," the Democrat said after casting his ballot Tuesday.

On the ground in Alabama on Tuesday, those who stood in line to cast their ballots were far more focused on the candidates than the broader political fallout.

Teresa Brown, a 53-year-old administrative assistant, said she preferred Jones, in part, because he would be better positioned to work across party lines. "We don't need a pedophile in there," Brown added.

She was among more than two dozen people queued up in the chilly morning air at Legion Field, a predominantly black precinct in Birmingham, to cast their ballots. Al Bright, 63, who does refrigeration repair, said he voted for Moore.

"Regardless of the allegations against him, I believe he is an honorable man," Bright said.

Mary Multrie, 69, who works in a children's hospital, disagreed.

"He's not a truthful man," 69-year-old Mary Multrie said of Moore. Multrie wasn't influenced by accusations of sexual misconduct against Moore, she said, because she already did not like him. "He talks about God, but you don't see God in his actions."

Moore, who largely avoided public events in the final weeks of the race and spent far less money on advertising than his opponent, bet big—and lost—on the state's traditional Republican leanings and the strength of his passionate evangelical Christian supporters.

He sidestepped questions about sexual misconduct as he arrived at his polling place on horseback.

Wind gusts, smoke complicate firefighters job in Custer park

CUSTER, S.D. (AP)—Strong wind gusts and thick smoke were making it difficult for firefighters battling a spreading wildfire late Tuesday in Custer State Park in the Black Hills of South Dakota.

The fire grew to more than 6.25 square miles (16.2 square kilometers) Tuesday and was only 7 percent contained, according to the park and state officials.

Custer State Park is one of South Dakota's most popular destinations, featuring hills with ponderosa pine and prairie. It is known for its herds of bison and other wildlife. Officials say wildlife isn't at risk because animals in the park are familiar with wildfire and naturally avoid dangerous areas.

Firefighters have concentrated on protecting structures including popular tourist sites such as the Blue Bell Lodge and the State Game Lodge.

"We can tip our hats and thank our firefighters that we haven't lost any of these buildings," Kobee Stalder, the park's visitor services program manager, told KELO-AM. "I'm very confident to say that we are not going to lose any of these buildings."

Five homes in the park have been evacuated and one unused building was burned down. No one has been injured.

The blaze erupted Monday during dry, warm weather. The cause is under investigation.

The park will remain closed at least until Friday.

San Francisco native becomes city's 1st black woman mayor

SAN FRANCISCO (AP)—San Francisco native London Breed became the city's acting mayor Tuesday following the sudden death of Mayor Ed Lee, and is the first African-American woman to lead the city in the midst of a seemingly endless technology driven economic boom.

Breed, 43, is a lifelong San Francisco resident who was raised by her grandmother in the city's predominantly black and lower-income Western Addition neighborhood, part of the same district she now represents as a city supervisor. She said she and Lee bonded over their shared experience of growing up in public housing.

"He was from the dawn of his career an advocate for the powerless," Breed told reporters and a crowd of several hundred city workers who gathered to honor Lee in City Hall.

Breed, like Lee a Democrat, graduated from a San Francisco public high school and earned a bachelor's degree from the University of California, Davis and a master's degree in public administration from the University of San Francisco.

Breed

She got her start in politics as an intern in the city's housing department during the tenure of Mayor Willie Brown that ended in 2004. Brown has not held public office since then but continues to exert considerable influence on city politics, and helped elect Lee.

Nationally, Breed's political positions on issues like funding housing projects for the homeless and support for marijuana legalization are viewed as solidly liberal.

But within the insular politics of San Francisco, she has had to defend her credentials from attacks from the left that she is a moderate and beholden to Brown, Lee and other traditional Democrats.

She will remain acting mayor and board president of the supervisors unless a majority of the 11-member board votes to appoint another person, city attorney Dennis Herrera said. Herrera said San Francisco will now vote for a mayor in June 2018 rather than November 2019 election that was to take place at the end of Lee's term.

Breed had been considered likely to run for mayor after Lee's second—and last—erm expired.

Breed won election to the board in 2012 after serving on the city's redevelopment agency and fire commission. But she lost the backing of influential U.S. Sen. Dianne Feinstein when she responded to questions from a local news outlet with profanities, saying she was not controlled by anyone.

Her blunt-speaking ways have led to other political controversies, especially on Twitter where she enraged critics during her first months serving as a supervisor. At one point, she blamed some bicyclists for causing road safety problems.

After deleting her Twitter account for several months, Breed worked to soften her image and by 2015 lined up enough board votes to win the job leading the board.

Supervisor Malia Cohen nominated her for board president, an influential position that controls committee assignments and the board's weekly agenda, saying she had seen Breed "mature" in the two years since her election.

"She was a brash hothead," Cohen said to laughter during the meeting when Breed was appointed president. "But to watch her mature and grow into a leadership position has been amazing."

Asia

Bangladesh questions family of man accused of NYC attack

DHAKA, Bangladesh (AP)—Bangladesh counter-terrorism officers are questioning the wife and other relatives of a man accused of carrying out a bomb attack in New York City's subway system, officials said Tuesday.

Bangladesh's government condemned the attack, saying it opposes all forms of terrorism and violent extremism.

U.S. authorities have identified the suspect as Akayed Ullah, a 27-year-old Bangladeshi immigrant. Ullah is accused of strapping a crude pipe bomb to his body and detonating it during rush hour Monday in an attack in which only he was seriously wounded.

Relatives and police said Ullah last visited Bangladesh in September to see his wife and newborn son. He left both behind when he returned to the United States.

Ullah arrived in the United States in 2011 and the Department of Homeland Security said he is a lawful permanent resident of the U.S. who was living in Brooklyn. He came to the U.S. on a visa issued to him based on a family connection to a U.S. citizen.

Law enforcement officials familiar with the investigation said Ullah had looked at Islamic State group propaganda online and told investigators he was retaliating against U.S. military aggression, but had no direct contact with the group. The people spoke on the condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to speak publicly about the blast.

Ullah's uncle, Abdul Ahad, said the suspect mostly remained inside a small apartment in Dhaka's Hazribagh area when he recently visited Bangladesh.

"He went out of his residence to offer prayers at a nearby mosque," Ahad told The Associated Press.

He said Ullah arrived in Bangladesh on Sept. 8 and returned to New York on Oct. 22.

"He stayed with his wife and 6-month-old baby boy," he said, adding that Ullah was a quiet person who rarely socialized.

Ahad said Ullah also returned to Bangladesh two years ago to get married and stayed then for about three months.

Ahad, Ullah's wife and her parents are being interrogated by officials from Bangladesh's Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime Department, said Abdul Mannan, an official involved in the investigation.

Mannan said Ullah appeared to have no criminal record in Bangladesh and was not a known member of any militant group.

The government said in a statement that "Bangladesh is committed to its declared policy of 'zero tolerance' against terrorism, and condemns terrorism and violent extremism in all forms or manifestations anywhere in the world, including Monday morning's incident in New York City."

Bangladesh, a Muslim-majority country governed by largely secular laws, has struggled with a rise in radical Islam in recent years.

ASIAN BRIEFS

Stay or flee: Sold NKorean brides face hard choices in China

WESTERN LIAONING PROVINCE, China (AP)—Thousands of North Korea women over the past decades have been trafficked across their country's border and sold as brides to Chinese men. The Associated Press spoke with trafficked North Korean women and Chinese husbands to tell a story that's largely ignored. Most of the women were lured by brokers who promised them jobs but then sold them to Chinese men. Some of the North Koreans get along with their new families and are satisfied with their new life in China. Others are abused by their husbands or ignored or mocked by their new relatives and neighbors. Others have risked the perilous journey to South Korea—with some having to make the heart-wrenching choice to leave children behind again, this time in China.

Pedophile stopped at Sydney Airport by anti-sex tourism law

CANBERRA, Australia (AP)—A convicted child molester was prevented from flying overseas from Sydney Airport on Wednesday under new laws aimed at keeping Australian pedophiles out of Southeast Asian sex tourist markets. Laws that took effect on Wednesday prevent 20,000 convicted pedophiles listed on the Australian child sex offender register from leaving the country except for specific purposes approved by law enforcement agencies. Australian pedophiles are notorious for taking inexpensive vacations to nearby Southeast Asian and Pacific island countries to abuse children. Foreign Minister Julie Bishop would not say where the pedophile stopped in Sydney was headed. He was being questioned by police. It is now a federal crime punishable by up to five years in prison for registered child molesters to leave the country without law enforcement agencies' permission. About 320 convicted sex offenders left Australia last year without registering their plans with government authorities.

Ex-US deserter to NKorea who married Japanese abductee dies

TOKYO (AP)—Charles Jenkins, a U.S. Army deserter to North Korea who married a Japanese abductee and lived in Japan after their release, has died. He was 77. Jenkins was found collapsed outside his home in Sado in northern Japan on Monday and was taken to a hospital where he was later pronounced dead, a group representing families of Japanese citizens abducted by North Korea said Tuesday. Public broadcaster NHK said he died of heart failure. Jenkins, of Rich Square, North Carolina, disappeared in January 1965 while on patrol along the Demilitarized Zone dividing North and South Korea. He later called his desertion a mistake that led to decades of deprivation and hardship in the communist country. In North Korea, Jenkins met his wife Hitomi Soga, who had been kidnapped from Japan in 1978, and the couple had two daughters, Mika and Blinda. His wife was allowed to visit Japan in 2002 and stayed. Jenkins and their daughters followed in 2004. Once in Japan, Jenkins was subject to a U.S. court-martial in 2004 in which he said he deserted because of fear of being sent to fight in Vietnam. He pleaded guilty to desertion and aiding the enemy and was dishonorably discharged and sentenced to 25 days in a U.S. military jail in Japan. Jenkins and his family lived in Soga's hometown of Sado, where he was a popular worker at a local souvenir shop and could often be seen posing for photos with tourists.

World

Freed prisoner saw first hand radicalization in Egyptian jails

DUBLIN (AP)—An Irish citizen recently acquitted after four years of being imprisoned in Egypt says he saw dozens of cellmates become radicalized and adopt views of the Islamic State group during his brutal captivity in overcrowded jails.

AP

In this Nov. 21, 2017 photo, Irishman Ibrahim Halawa, who was recently acquitted after four years of imprisonment in Egypt, poses for a photograph at his home, in Dublin, Ireland.

Ibrahim Halawa, 21, was arrested after security forces broke up a 2013 sit-in protesting the army's overthrow of an elected Islamist president, and was released in October after being held in a half-dozen detention centers. His experience provides a unique perspective on how conditions inside Egypt's notorious prisons have degenerated during an unprecedented crackdown on dissent.

Born in the Dublin suburb of Crumlin to parents of Egyptian descent, Halawa had faced death by hanging on charges that ranged from inciting violence to murder, and says regular beatings with bars and metal chains during captivity led him and others to the brink of despair.

"In the beginning, no one had even heard of Daesh, but by the time I left, maybe 20 percent were openly supporting their ideas," he said, using the Arabic acronym for IS. "It could have been just talk—many of them were engineers, students and doctors who just wanted to get home to their families—but after all those years of being in jail with no explanation, many wanted revenge."

The extremist group boasts a powerful affiliate in Egypt's northern Sinai that has stepped up attacks in recent years, killing hundreds of security forces and civilians and expanding its reach to the mainland. Last month gunmen waving the group's black flag killed 300 people at a Sinai mosque in the deadliest terror attack ever carried out in the country.

Authorities have meanwhile waged a sweeping crackdown on dissent. Human rights groups say as many as 60,000 political prisoners are being held in Egyptian jails, mainly Islamist supporters of ousted President Mohammed Morsi but also several prominent secular activists.

Poll: Over 90 pct. of Palestinians oppose Trump move

RAMALLAH, West Bank (AP)—The Palestinians overwhelmingly oppose President Donald Trump's recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital and have little faith in the U.S. or their Arab allies, according to a poll released Tuesday.

The poll found that 91 percent of respondents consider Trump' declaration last week to be a threat to Palestinian interests. Forty-five percent believe the Palestinians should cut all contacts with the U.S., submit a complaint to the International Criminal Court and launch an armed uprising against Israel.

Trump's declaration departed from decades of U.S. policy that the fate of Jerusalem should be decided through negotiations. The Palestinians claim east Jerusalem, captured by Israel in the 1967 Mideast war, as the capital of a future independent state. Israel says the entire city, including east Jerusalem, is its eternal capital. East Jerusalem is home to sensitive Jewish, Muslim and Christian holy sites.

Trump said his decision merely recognizes the fact that Jerusalem already serves as Israel's capital and is not meant to prejudge the final borders of the city. But Palestinians saw the decision as siding with Israel on the most sensitive issue in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Trump's Mideast team, led by his adviser and son in law, Jared Kushner, have been shuttling throughout the region for nearly a year, meeting with Israeli, Palestinian and Arab leaders as it prepares a peace plan. The U.S. is expected to present its proposal next year, with a look to taking a regional approach that involves major Sunni Arab countries, such as Saudi Arabia and Egypt.

In Tuesday's survey, 72 percent of respondents said they believe the Trump administration will not submit a peace plan, while just 24 percent think it will. Eighty percent of respondents said they do not trust the Saudi role and 70 percent do not trust Egypt. Egypt has close security ties with Israel, and the Saudis are believed to have covert ties with Israel in an alliance against Iran.

Asked about the most effective means of establishing a Palestinian state, 44 percent called for armed resistance, while just 23 percent believe nonviolent resistance is most effective. Three months ago, only 35 percent supported armed resistance.

The poll also found widespread dissatisfaction with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, with 70 percent of the public wanting him to resign.

If new elections were held, it said that his rival, Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh, would defeat him by a 53 percent to 41 percent margin. However, the most popular Palestinian leader continues to be Marwan Barghouti, a former uprising leader serving multiple life sentences in an Israeli prison after being convicted in deadly attacks. Barghouti would beat both Abbas and Haniyeh in a three-way race, according to the poll.

The poll, conducted by the respected Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research, questioned 1,270 adults and had a margin of error of 3 percentage points.

Environment

‘King tides’ are rising, so groups span globe to monitor it

By STUART LEAVENWORTH
MCCLATCHY WASHINGTON BUREAU

City of Miami Mayor Tomas Regalado and his son Jose Regalado walk through the flooded streets in Shorecrest amid a king tide that flooded the area on Oct. 5, 2017. Scientists are recording ever-higher king tides on coasts nationwide, partly because of sea-level rise, and also because of efforts by citizen volunteers to photograph the flooding. King tides are higher than normal high tides. TNS

WASHINGTON—The tide watchers start patrolling whenever the celestial forces align. From coast to coast, hundreds of tide watchers come out with their cameras to record the latest “king tides,” brief episodes of tidal flooding that could become the norm, with expected sea level rise.

King tides are a colloquial term for the highest tides of the year. They occur when the moon is closest to the earth at moments when the sun, moon and Earth are in alignment, increasing the gravitational forces at play.

A decade ago, few had heard of “king tides,” much less waded through them in galoshes. Now, Miami regularly floods. So does Myrtle Beach, Charleston and other U.S. cities. And more than ever, groups of citizens are out there photographing the results, uploading the pics and debating what the future will bring.

“Coastal flooding is our new normal,” said Daniel J. Burger, who coordinates the King Tides Initiative for the South Carolina Department of Health & Environmental Control. “What we are doing is leveraging the capacity of interested citizens to document a very dynamic coastline.”

King tides have always been part of the world’s seasonal tidal variations. One just finished up along the coast of the Carolinas. In California, another one is expected Jan. 1 and 2, followed by one a few days later in Washington state.

Depending on a coast’s topography, king tides can increase the elevation of a high tide by a foot or more. Much depends on other natural forces at work. Offshore winds, for instance, can push a king tide higher. So can river runoff from recent rainfall, which gets backed up by the incoming tide.

Some cities are already experiencing ever higher king tides, also known as “sunny day” flooding. From 1970 to 2014, the annual number of sunny day floods in Charleston increased from two to 14.

In 2016, the city experienced a record of 50 tidal flood days, according to a study this year by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Savannah, Ga., also set a record with 38 tidal flood days, as did Key West with 14 days.

Over the last century, sea level has risen about a foot in Charleston. That’s one reason sunny day flooding has increased there and in other parts of the Carolinas, Virginia and Florida. With expected sea level rise in coming decades — caused by melting of the ice sheets and expansion of warming ocean waters — Charleston could see 180 days of sunny-day flooding by 2045. That means that current king tides could become the normal high tides.

As sea levels and tides rise, coastal cities face hard choices about preventing inundation. These include building expensive sea walls, elevating streets and retrofitting sewage treatment plants and other infrastructure. Natural habitats are also at risk. In Morro Bay, which sits roughly halfway between Los Angeles and San Francisco, coastal managers fear loss of salt marshes and possibly eelgrasses, essential parts of the marine food web.

Citizen environmental monitoring has a long history, most notably with the Audubon Society’s Christmas bird count. For king tides, the monitoring effort started in Australia in 2009, then spread quickly to North America and other parts of the world.

California started one of the United States’ first king tide programs, a collaboration between agencies and non-profit groups. “We wanted to give people a way to bring climate change home and see what it would look like,” said Marina Psaros, a founder of the program. More than 20,000 people now receive the group’s emails.

At a typical king tide event, volunteers are urged to fan out along a stretch of coastline and photograph impacts to beaches, roads and other locations. The photographs are then uploaded to a set of websites, or shared on Twitter or other social media.

As participation has increased, the resulting photographs are proving helpful to planners and flood-control agencies. According to Burger, South Carolina is using the photographs to gauge whether king tide flooding was lower or higher than forecasts had predicted.

Yet protocols vary in archiving the photographs. Some images online include no information on time and location. In South Carolina, managers have developed a “MyCoast” app where photographs are time stamped with geolocation data.

Some science educators have quickly recognized king tides as a potential teaching tool. In South Carolina, teacher Merrie Koester launched a project for students at Charleston Development Academy to explore flooding in and around the charter school, due to king tides, storm runoff and nearby development replacing marshes.

The students ended up producing a hip-hop video about king tides and the flooding. They also collaborated on a public presentation, which included an explanation of what causes king tides.

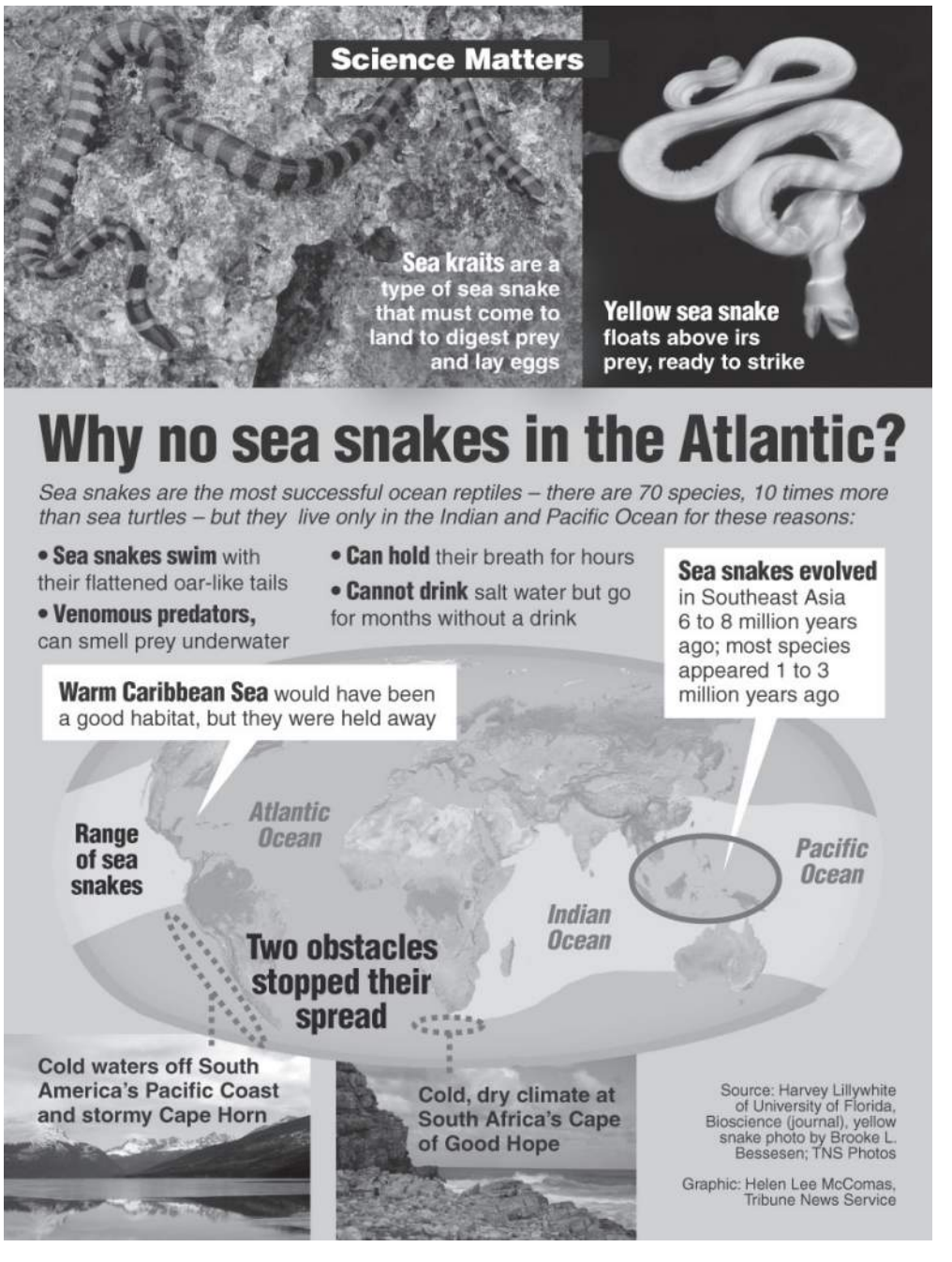
“A king tide takes place at full or new moon when the moon comes the closest it will ever be to the Earth,” said one of the students, Tonisha Forrest, in the video. “The closer it is, the harder its gravitational pull on the Earth’s water, and the higher the high tide.”

Koester said her students never heard about king tides before the project launched. Now they want to share what they learned.

“These kids are already coming up with ideas for hip-hop public service announcements,” she said. “Those could help in warning about future flood events.”

KING TIDE PROJECT ORGANIZERS

Worldwide: King Tides Project
California: King Tides Project
Florida: Tampa Bay Estuary Program King Tides
North Carolina: King Tides Project
South Carolina: King Tides Initiative
Washington state: Witness King Tides


Science Matters
Sea kraits are a type of sea snake that must come to land to digest prey and lay eggs
Yellow sea snake floats above irs prey, ready to strike
Why no sea snakes in the Atlantic?
Sea snakes are the most successful ocean reptiles – there are 70 species, 10 times more than sea turtles – but they live only in the Indian and Pacific Ocean for these reasons:
• Sea snakes swim with their flattened oar-like tails
• Venomous predators, can smell prey underwater
• Can hold their breath for hours
• Cannot drink salt water but go for months without a drink
Sea snakes evolved in Southeast Asia 6 to 8 million years ago; most species appeared 1 to 3 million years ago
Warm Caribbean Sea would have been a good habitat, but they were held away
Range of sea snakes
Atlantic Ocean
Pacific Ocean
Indian Ocean
Two obstacles stopped their spread
Cold waters off South America’s Pacific Coast and stormy Cape Horn
Cold, dry climate at South Africa’s Cape of Good Hope
Source: Harvey Lillywhite of University of Florida, Bioscience (journal), yellow snake photo by Brooke L. Bessesen; TNS Photos
Graphic: Helen Lee McComas, Tribune News Service

Life & Style

'The Last Jedi' a welcome disturbance in the Force

By JAKE COYLE
AP FILM WRITER

AP
Actors Daisy Ridley, left, and Mark Hamill pose for photographers upon arrival at the premiere of the film 'Star Wars: The Last Jedi' in London, Tuesday, Dec. 12th, 2017.

A welcome disturbance in the Force, Rian Johnson's "The Last Jedi" is, by wide measure, the trippiest, scrappiest and most rule-breaking "Star Wars" adventure yet.

Not the exercise in nostalgia that was J.J. Abrams' "The Force Awakens," Johnson's Episode VIII takes George Lucas' space opera in new, often thrilling, and sometimes erratic directions while finding the truest expression yet of the saga's underlying ethos of camaraderie in resistance to oppression. Though there are countless familiar broad strokes— rebel escapes, Jedi soul-searching, daddy issues— "The Last Jedi" has discovered some new moves yet, in the galaxy far, far away.

As the second installment in this third "Star Wars" trilogy, "The Last Jedi" is like the inverted corollary of "The Empire Strike Back" (long the super fan's favorite). While it is, like its part-two predecessor, often murky and weird, Johnson's frequently comic film distinguishes itself by upending the traditional power dynamics of heroes and bit players in the Star Wars galaxy.

Here, the odds-defying daredevil flyboy (Oscar Isaac as Resistance pilot Poe Dameron) is an impetuous chauvinist, at odds with a female commander (a purple-haired Laura Dern). "Get your head out of your cockpit," admonishes Leia (the late Carrie Fisher, to whom the film is dedicated). The master-apprentice relationship— previously Yoda instructing young Luke Skywalker (Mark Hamill) on a swampy remote planet— is now tilted more toward Rey, the young Jedi (Daisy Ridley), sent to stir a monkish Skywalker from a windswept, Porg-infested isle. And instead of a Tauntaun's guts being spilled, there are even moments of animal rights reflections creeping into the galaxy. About to bite into his rotisserie dinner, Chewbacca, with a sad groan, is struck by pangs of doubt.

Abrams's finest touch in his zippy and nimble reboot was in his diverse casting— in particular Ridley and John Boyega, as Finn, the Stormtrooper turned good guy. But Johnson, who also wrote the film, has gone further to shake up the familiar roles and rhythms of Star Wars. Scattershot and loose-limbed, "The Last Jedi" doesn't worship at its own altar, often undercutting its own grandiosity.

Those breaks of form— formerly mostly reserved for a smirking Harrison Ford— will throw some diehards. Especially in the surreal isolated scenes of Rey and Luke— where Luke, with a thick gray mane and a hermit's foul-manner is seen drinking a creature's breast milk and pole-vaulting from rock to rock— "The Last Jedi" teeters on the edge of camp.

It's not surprising that Johnson, the director of the twisty time-traveling noir "Looper," has made a movie full of clever inversions. What's jarring is that he's made a "Star Wars" film that tries to not take itself too seriously, while simultaneously making it more emotional.

Yet before its considerable payoff, "The Last Jedi" feels lost and grasping for its purpose. Unlike the earlier films, the less tactile "The Last Jedi" isn't much for world building, and its sense of place isn't as firm. As an intergalactic travelogue, it's a disappointment.

There are exceptions, though, especially the chambers of the Supreme Leader Snoke (Andy Serkis, adding to his gallery of grotesques). Soaked in an otherworldly crimson red, Snoke's lair looks like something out of Kubrick's "Eyes Wide Shut."

Johnson also lacks what Lucas and Abrams alike recognized as the franchise's most potent weapon: Ford. As the prairie boy turned knight, Hamill has never been the saga's heart-and-soul. While Luke gets his big moment, "The Last Jedi" doesn't do him any favors, plopping him on a pitiless jagged rock away from the action and a backstory filled with regret.

As Fisher's final "Star Wars" film, it's a shame she isn't more front-and-center. (The next film was to be hers, the way Ford and now Hamill have had theirs.) But she makes her scenes count.

Though Isaac has been fashioned as the heir-apparent to the bemused Ford, Boyega is the actor I've left both episode VII and VIII wanting more of. The downside in a story that spins its characters around the galaxy is that the new generation of Star Wars protagonists hasn't had time for the small gestures that would shape their characters— close-ups that their forerunners were afforded. Even after two films, Rey is more of an unstoppable sprite than a fleshed-out person.

But "The Last Jedi," as if with a wind against its back, gathers momentum. By breaking down some of the old mythology, Johnson has staked out new territory. For the first time in a long time, a "Star Wars" film feels forward-moving.

Much of that sense of progress comes in the character of Rose Tico (a superlative Kelly Marie Tran), a maintenance worker who's thrust into a pivotal role in the rebellion. It's she who voices the film's abiding message, one that— as the first "Star Wars" film of the Trump era— has affecting resonance. The Resistance will win, she says, "not fighting what we hate" but "saving what we love."

In a pop culture juggernaut as imposing as Star Wars, these moments carry more meaning than they would elsewhere. After long skating around anything political, "The Last Jedi"— whether it's meant to be or not— has the tenor of a rallying cry. Johnson has fully internalized a single line of dialogue from "The Return of the Jedi"— "You rebel scum," said with disdain by a Nazi-like lieutenant— and turned it into a badge of pride.

"Star Wars: The Last Jedi," a Walt Disney Co. release, is rated PG-13 by the Motion Picture Association of America for "sequences of sci-fi action and violence." Running time: 152 minutes. ✪✪✪✩

Trump says female senator 'would do anything' for money

WASHINGTON (AP)— Fending off the renewed focus on sexual harassment allegations against him, President Donald Trump lashed out at Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand on Tuesday, declaring the New York Democrat and frequent presidential critic had come to his office "begging" for campaign contributions and "would do anything" to get them.

A chorus of Democrats accused Trump of insinuations about Gillibrand that were unsavory at best.

Nothing of the kind, retorted White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders. She said "there is no way that this is sexist at all," and she suggested the tweet could be considered sexually charged "only if your mind is in the gutter."

Gillibrand, who had called for the president's resignation a day earlier because of allegations of sexual misconduct, called his attack a "sexist smear attempting to silence my voice."

"I will not be silenced on this issue," she said. "Neither will the women who stood up to the president yesterday," referring to those who have accused the president of sexual harassment.

With nearly each week bringing new headlines about sexual misconduct forcing men from positions of power, the rising #MeToo movement has landed squarely at the front door of Trump's White House. A handful of Democratic senators have called for his resignation, nearly 60 lawmakers are urging a congressional probe into his behavior and some of the 16 women who have accused Trump of harassment have resurfaced their stories.

Gillibrand, one of the leading lawmakers advocating against sexual harassment and a potential 2020 presidential contender, was at a bipartisan Bible study session when a staffer alerted her to Trump's tweet, according to an aide.

AP
Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, D-N.Y., attends a news conference, Tuesday, Dec. 12, 2017, on Capitol Hill in Washington.

Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass., another potential presidential contender, tweeted to the president: "Are you really trying to bully, intimidate and slut-shame @SenGillibrand? Do you know who you're picking a fight with? Good luck with that, @realDonaldTrump."

Trump's tweet Tuesday did not directly address sexual harassment, but said of Gillibrand: "Lightweight Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, a total flunky for Chuck Schumer and someone who would come to my office "begging" for campaign contributions not so long ago (and would do anything for them), is now in the ring fighting against Trump. Very disloyal to Bill & Crooked-USED!"

Sanders insisted that Trump meant to denounce Gillibrand's role within the Washington political culture and nothing more.

LA police probe claim Roman Polanski molested girl in '75

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Los Angeles detectives said Tuesday they are investigating a woman's claim that Oscar-winning director Roman Polanski molested her in 1975, when she was 10 years old. But the allegations are so old that criminal charges couldn't be brought, even if proven.

Although the statute of limitations has long expired, law enforcement officials may be able to use any evidence they collect to help prosecute other cases.

Authorities are now probing the case because Los Angeles detectives "will always take a report from any victim and then determine if the case is within the statute of limitations," police spokesman Josh Rubenstein said.

The 84-year-old director has been a fugitive since he fled to France in 1978 on the eve of sentencing in an unrelated case for sexually assaulting a then-13-year-old girl. He splits his time between France, his native Poland and Switzerland.

The victim in that case, Samantha Geimer, made an impassioned plea to a California judge earlier this year supporting Polanski's efforts to end the four-decade legal saga that limits his freedom.

The latest allegations against Polanski were first reported to police in October when Marianne Barnard, a California artist, said Polanski had molested her during a photo shoot in 1975 after he had her pose nude in a fur coat on a beach in Los Angeles County.

AP

This combination of file photos shows director Roman Polanski at the photo call for the film, "Based On A True Story," at the 70th international film festival, Cannes, southern France, on May 27, 2017, left, and Polanski at a Santa Monica, Calif., courthouse on Aug. 8, 1977.

The Associated Press does not generally name people who report being sexually assaulted, but is doing so because Barnard has used social media to draw attention to her allegations. She did not immediately respond Tuesday to an emailed request for comment.

Polanski's attorney, Harland Braun, said he has hired an investigator to interview the accuser's relatives and has told the investigator to speak with police and provide any information and documents they obtained.

"I believe that a competent LAPD investigation will prove the whole story to be bogus," he said in an email.

The 84-year-old director has been a fugitive since he fled to France in 1978 on the eve of sentencing in an unrelated case for having unlawful sex with a minor. Prosecutors dropped charges that he drugged, raped and sodomized the girl.

NBC's 'Today' in ratings lead after Matt Lauer's firing

NEW YORK (AP)—Matt who? NBC's "Today" show was the most-watched morning program for the first full week after long-time host Matt Lauer was fired because of sexual misconduct charges.

The Nielsen company said it was the first time in a year that "Today" had beaten its rival "Good Morning America" at ABC for two consecutive weeks.

The show's victory the previous week wasn't very surprising. With all of the attention given to Lauer's firing, it was to be expected that more viewers than usual would tune in to see how people on the show would react to the news.

Maintaining that lead for the week after Lauer's exit was more interesting. "Good Morning America" generally gets the most viewers in the morning, although NBC's advantage among younger viewers makes it the more lucrative show.

NBC hasn't said anything about Lauer's replacement, but the ratings have to be considered good news for Hoda Kotb, who has filled in as Savannah Guthrie's co-host since the morning Lauer's firing was announced. NBC currently has no one else scheduled for a fill-in week.

"Today" averaged 4.58 million viewers last week to 4.38 million at "Good Morning America." ''CBS This Morning" was third at 3.57 million.

The CBS ratings illustrate virtually no change since that show's co-host, Charlie Rose, was also fired for sexual misconduct on the Tuesday before Thanksgiving. For the four last weeks when Rose was on the show, "CBS This Morning" averaged 3.61 million viewers, Nielsen said. During that same period, "Good Morning America" had 4.34 million viewers and "Today" had 4.22 million.

CNN's Acosta complains of White House threat

NEW YORK (AP)—CNN's Jim Acosta says he was warned by the White House press secretary Sarah Sanders not to ask a question during President Donald Trump's bill signing ceremony on Tuesday, further evidence of sour relations between the network and administration.

Acosta said Sanders told him that if he asked Trump a question, "she could not promise that I would be allowed into a pool spray again."

Sanders did not immediately return a request for comment on Tuesday.

He was one of a handful of reporters allowed into the event, which has limited space, as part of a "pool" where they act as surrogates for the entire press corps. He asked a question anyway, about a Trump tweet in which the president claimed New York Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand begged him for campaign contributions and would "do anything" for them. Acosta's question went unanswered.

"We don't respond to threats," he said on CNN later. "We're not going to be intimidated."

Trump has repeatedly derided CNN as "fake news," his ire driven over the past few days over an error that CNN made during a story last week about the investigation into collusion with Russia during the presidential campaign. Acosta and Sanders had a contentious exchange during Monday's White House press briefing.

AP

White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders listens to a reporter's question during the daily press briefing at the White House, Tuesday, Dec. 12, 2017, in Washington.

'A Fantastic Woman' director celebrates Golden Globe nod

NEW YORK (AP)—Director Sebastian Lelio feels that "A Fantastic Woman" has gone beyond the cinematic experience with its social message, to a great extent thanks to the performance of its star, Daniela Vega.

The film follows Marina, a transgender woman who, after the passing of her older lover, is mistreated by his family and the police officers investigating his death. It is Chile's selection for the Academy Awards and on Monday was nominated for a Golden Globe Award in the best foreign film category.

"I am very proud of Daniela, of how she faced the challenge of a movie that not only meant an absolute leading role ... that goes through an emotional spectrum, but that in addition flies, faces wind storms, sings two operatic arias. In short, it's a polytonal role of great complexity and she ... didn't have much experience so it was an all or nothing betting," Lelio told The Associated Press in a phone interview shortly after the Globes nominations were announced.

Christmas babies find plenty to celebrate at the holidays

DEAR ABBY: This letter is in response to "Blessed in New York" (Aug. 4), the mom who gave birth to her precious daughter on Christmas Day and wondered if maybe she should have timed her pregnancy better.

Our daughter was born on Dec. 20. When she was only a few years old, we purchased a 2-foot-tall artificial tree and named it the "birthday tree." She could decorate it every year however she liked. Any birthday presents went under that tree. That made her day special. When she got married and moved out, her birthday tree went with her.

BLESSED, TOO, IN INDIANA

DEAR BLESSED, TOO: I enjoyed reading the letters from you and other readers who are Christmas babies or have a family member who is one. Their upbeat, positive experiences made me smile. Read on:

DEAR ABBY: My daughter was born on Christmas Eve. From the time she was 5 and able to recognize that her birthday cards were getting scrambled in with the other holiday cards, we started celebrating on June 24— her half-birthday. She gets excited every year as it nears. She'll be 32. Celebrating her half-birthday was the best thing we could have decided to do, and I have no regrets.

MOM OF A CHRISTMAS BABY

DEAR ABBY: I was born in December and I LOVE my birthday! My mother, grandmother, sister-in-law and niece were also born in December. It's a great time to have a birthday. Everything is decorated for the holidays, and most people are in a good mood. My family never blended the occasions, so that helped.

As to people's comments, my reply is: "Everyone has a birthday. Mine just happens to be at Christmastime, so please acknowledge that." The only thing I do wish is, if I receive a birthday gift, I hope it's wrapped in birthday paper and not Christmas wrap.

HOLLY IN ARKANSAS

DEAR ABBY: I do not recommend celebrating the kid's half-birthday in June. In June, people are away at camp or on vacation, and there's no one to invite to the party.

Early December is a perfect time for a birthday party. Sports are over and the holiday parties haven't started, school is still in session so everyone is still around. Another good time is early January, right after school starts again but the other activities haven't yet geared up.

BUSY DECEMBER MOM

DEAR ABBY: Fifty-five years ago my husband and I weren't thinking ahead either. Our son was born on Christmas Day. He still thinks that's great.

Christmas always lasted until after the presents were opened and the kitchen was cleaned following lunch. Then it was birthday time! It was special because his long-distance grandparents were always there.

When he became old enough for birthday parties, he could choose to have it on any day while school was out for the holiday break—either before or after Christmas. It worked well for our family and it might for others, too.

CAROLYN IN TEXAS

DEAR ABBY: Tell that new mom to cheer up. My mother was born on Christmas Day and she loved it. She said the reason was no one ever forgot it, and everyone got the day off!

SARA IN FLORIDA

To receive a collection of Abby's most memorable – and most frequently requested – poems and essays, send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for $7 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby – Keepers Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. Shipping and handling are included in the price.

DEAR ABBY

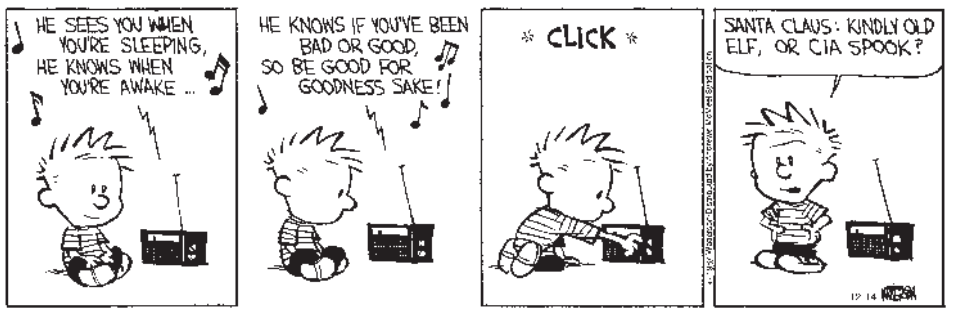
By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

Pastimes

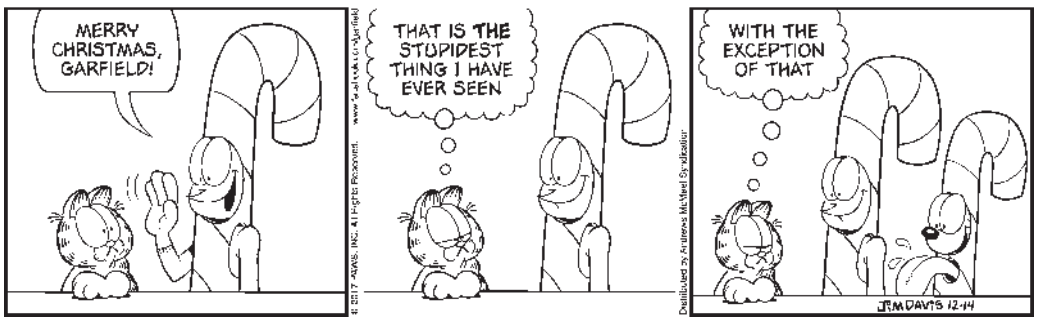
Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson


HE SEES YOU WHEN YOU'RE SLEEPING, HE KNOWS WHEN YOU'RE AWAKE ...
HE KNOWS IF YOU'VE BEEN BAD OR GOOD, SO BE GOOD FOR GOODNESS SAKE!
* CLICK *
SANTA CLAUS: KINDLY OLD ELF, OR CIA SPOOK?

Garfield®

By Jim Davis



Adam@home

By Bryan Basset

HOW CAN THIS PERSON PAY YOU THAT MUCH TO WRITE HER BOOK?
LOOK, SHE'S... WELL...
TAPPA TAP
SHE'S A MAJOR CELEBRITY, OKAY? I'D TELL YOU WHO, BUT I SIGNED A REALLY INTENSE NDA.
SERIOUSLY? WHO IS IT?
NO WAY. THE PENALTIES CLAUSE WAS SCARY.
TAP TIP
I'M YOUR WIFE. I THINK YOU CAN TELL ME.
LAURA, THE WORDS "SMITE" AND "LEGAL APOCALYPSE" WERE USED.
TAP

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy

AW.. LOOK- THE MOM AND DAD AND ALL FOUR KIDS ARE WEARING THE SAME REINDEER P.J.S!
BUT I WONDER WHY THEY'RE CALLED "PAJAMA-GRAMS"?
BECAUSE "PAJAMA-CULT UNIFORMS" WOULD NEVER SELL.

CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Sharp turn
4 Ointment amounts
8 Pal
12 Altar promise
13 Vicinity
14 Protagonist
15 2014 Ben Affleck film
17 Persia, today
18 Pooch
19 Hybrid fruit
21 Tea biscuits
24 Quarterback Marino
25 MSN alternative
26 Ewe's mate
28 [Yawn]
32 Carpet type
34 Spy org.
36 Roman emperor
37 Firetruck necessities
39 Joan of —
41 Links grp.
42 URL ending
44 Baby cat
46 Invective
50 Actor Stephen
51 "— to differ!"
52 Seasoning herb
56 Spanish ayes
57 Ballet attire
58 Sugar suffix
59 "The Thin Man" dog
60 Mid-month date
61 Fanatic

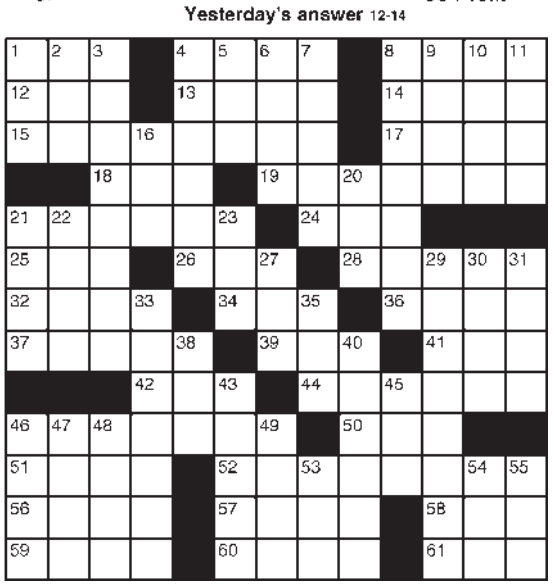
DOWN

1 Sharp turn
2 Fuss
3 Venetian vessels
4 Sharp weapon
5 "Entourage" role
6 Ernie's "Sesame Street" pal
7 Leaves for lunch?
8 Ballerina's hairstyle
9 Roll call reply
10 Russian river
11 Stereo alternative
16 A billion years
20 "Unh-unh"
21 Obi
22 Silver salmon
23 Pouch
27 Ms. Farrow
29 Seven-sided figure
30 Desire
31 Complain
33 Alabama neighbor
35 Biblical boat
38 Lanka lead-in
40 High, wispy cloud
43 "The Dapper Don"
45 Earl Grey, for one
46 Travel permit
47 Nile wader
48 Try out
49 Praise
53 Numbered rd.
54 Buck-eyes' sch.
55 Profit

Solution time: 24 mins.

S	I	R		T	R	I	M		J	U	D	O
C	D	U		I	O	T	A		I	G	O	R
A	L	T		T	E	A	L	I	G	H	T	S
N	E	I	R	U			E	R	G			
			E	L	B	A		S	E	V	E	N
■	E	A	C	A	R	T	S	■	I	T	E	
W	A	G		R	U	S	E	S		E	T	A
	C	E	D	■	T	E	A	T	O	W	E	L
■	H	E	R	E	■	A	M	O	R	■		
			A	Y	E	■			R	O	W	D	Y
■	E	A	K	E	T	T	L	E	■	I	R	E
R	A	R	E	■	C	H	O	U	■	F	U	N
U	R	I	S	■	H	E	L	P	■	E	M	S

Yesterday's answer 12-14



STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955**! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Vanessa Hudgens, 29; Sophie Monk, 38; Beth Orton, 47; Dee Wallace, 69.

Happy Birthday: You'll have to be creative if you want to outsmart someone who can influence the way you advance personally or professionally. It's important to take charge of your life and refuse to let others interfere in your moving in the direction you want to pursue. Don't walk away from conflict when you could fight instead for the right to make your own choice. Your numbers are 1, 9, 16, 22, 28, 35, 44.

ARIES *(March 21-April 19):* Use your imagination, but don't be fooled into thinking that things will just fall into place. If you want something, it's up to you to make it happen. Expressing your desires will help you drum up help and support. Romance is encouraged. ✪✪✪

TAURUS *(April 20-May 20):* Partnerships should be considered. Look at what others have to offer and make choices based on the most beneficial relationships possible. Don't believe everything you are told. Instead, gather proof. ✪✪✪

GEMINI *(May 21-June 20):* Use your business skills, know-how and experience to outmaneuver someone who is trying to get you to carry the majority of the responsibilities. Offer a fair alternative that will not compromise your position or your future dealings. ✪✪✪

CANCER *(June 21-July 22):* Stay focused on what you want to accomplish, but also pay tribute to those who have helped you along the way. Recognition and acting in good faith will be admirable and also serve to prop up your reputation and popularity. ✪✪✪✪

LEO *(July 23-Aug. 22):* Home improvements that are specific and kept under budget will help reduce your overhead and motivate you to better handle your financial affairs. Be precise and detailed when discussing your plans to avoid a costly error. ✪✪

VIRGO *(Aug. 23-Sept. 22):* Short trips, partnerships and taking care of business should be your priority. A function that allows you to present what you have to offer will pay off. Disregard anyone who is attempting to outshine you. Trust in your skills and experience. ✪✪✪✪

LIBRA *(Sept. 23-Oct. 22):* Joint financial ventures should be looked over carefully. You may want to make an adjustment, but gather all the facts and make sure it won't jeopardize your cash flow. Ask questions and take care of your affairs personally. ✪✪✪

SCORPIO *(Oct. 23-Nov. 21):* Share your emotions with someone you care about. Planning something that will improve the way you live can give you incentive to come up with and stick to a budget. Travel and new experiences are encouraged. ✪✪✪

SAGITTARIUS *(Nov. 22-Dec. 21):* Call in favors and do what you have to do to get ahead. Working diligently and secretively to achieve something that can help you move forward will pay off. An innovative idea will outmatch any competition you face. ✪✪✪

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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CAPRICORN *(Dec. 22-Jan. 19):* Show how passionate you are about what you do, and you will impress the powers that be. Your attention to detail and your power of persuasion will put you in an ideal position to get what you want. ✪✪✪✪

AQUARIUS *(Jan. 20-Feb. 18):* Overreacting and emotional outbursts will lead to a feud you'll wish you never started. Back away from discord and apply your time and energy toward doing something that benefits yourself and others. Choose love over anger. ✪✪

PISCES *(Feb. 19-March 20):* Make a donation that will give you the tax write-off you need as well as help out a charitable organization. You can cut your costs if you are strict about the way you spend your money. ✪✪✪✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are competitive, demanding and protective. You are excitable and free-spirited.

To submit astrological questions to the "Dear Eugenia" column, visit Eugenialast.com, or join Eugenia on Twitter/Facebook/LinkedIn.

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

		6			7		1	
	5							
				3		2	7	
5	2	1				4		
		4				7		
		3				8	9	2
	8	9		2				
							3	
	3		6			5		

Difficulty Level ★★★ 12/14

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's Answer

9	1	8	6	5	2	7	4	3
5	3	6	7	9	4	1	8	2
4	7	2	8	1	3	6	5	9
2	9	5	4	7	1	3	6	8
7	4	3	2	6	8	9	1	5
8	6	1	5	3	9	4	2	7
3	8	9	1	4	5	2	7	6
1	5	7	3	2	6	8	9	4
6	2	4	9	8	7	5	3	1

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WONDERWORD

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the **WONDERWORD.**

'SATURDAY NIGHT FEVER' TURNS 40 Solution: 14 letters

D	H	N	Y	J	B	A	S	I	L	I	N	D	A	S
O	A	I	E	N	O	E	I	N	A	H	P	E	T	S
C	R	N	N	R	N	E	E	R	O	D	T	A	L	E
S	D	E	C	F	A	E	Y	G	J	T	Y	J	O	O
U	W	O	N	I	E	K	D	Ⓨ	E	I	M	O	V	H
F	A	E	O	A	N	R	N	N	Ⓝ	E	V	S	A	S
O	R	Y	V	W	M	G	N	A	D	Ⓞ	S	E	R	E
R	E	E	E	O	G	A	L	O	R	L	Ⓣ	P	T	I
T	O	S	T	C	L	I	N	H	E	F	I	H	A	G
A	C	S	N	S	V	N	T	G	B	M	L	E	A	O
L	S	Y	W	E	A	R	O	S	A	E	A	U	W	O
K	I	D	M	P	E	A	N	T	D	N	C	S	A	B
I	D	O	U	B	L	E	J	O	H	N	O	K	E	P
N	E	P	O	E	G	D	I	R	A	K	J	E	E	S
G	O	R	N	E	Y	A	B	E	M	U	S	I	C	R

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Annette, Badham, Bay, Becker, Bee Gees, Boogie Shoes, Dancing, Denny, Disco, Donna, Doreen, Double J, Frank, Fusco, Gorney, Hardware, Inferno, Jive, Joey, John, Joseph, Karen, K-Jee, Linda, Lisa, Love, Manero, Mangano, Music, Odyssey, Open, Paul, Pescow, Ridge, Robert, Sesame, Stayin' Alive, Stephanie, Stigwood, Store, Talkin', Tony, Travolta, Weil

Yesterday's Answer: Blueberry Hill

Treasuries 13 through 26 can be purchased online in time for the holidays at WonderWordBooks.com or call 1-800-642-6480.

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High School Diploma or GED with previous work experience in travel or tour operation, sales or service related field. Must be able and willing to work shifts, evenings, holidays, and weekends. Preferably fluent in both written and oral communication in the English, Chinese, and Korean languages. Preferably Lifeguard Certified.

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(3) Electrician (Saipan)
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(1) ARFF General Maintenance-I (Saipan)
(1) Custodial/Maintenance-I (Rota)
(1) CADD Operator (Saipan)
(1) IT Specialist (Saipan)
(1) Equipment Operator-I (Saipan)
(3) General Maintenance-I (Saipan)
(1) Custodial-I (Saipan)
(1) Procurement Clerk (Saipan)
(1) General Maintenance-II (Rota-Seaport)
(1) Staff Attorney (Saipan)

Employment Applications and the Position Descriptions, containing detailed information on qualifications for the above positions, shall be picked up and submitted to one of the following offices from Monday-Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. ChST, except on holidays:

- **Saipan: CPA Administration Office, 2nd Floor, Arrival Terminal, Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport;**
- **Tinian: CPA Administration Office, West Tinian International Airport;**
- **Rota: CPA Administration Office, Benjamin Taisacan Manglona International Airport (Rota).**

A printable copy of the application and position descriptions may also be downloaded at www.cpa.gov.mp.

The Employment Application must be accompanied with a copy of all required diploma/certificates and/or official sealed transcripts, original official recent police record not more than six (6) months old, original copy of U.S. Department of Defense Form DD214 for retired members or veterans of our Armed Forces, and other documents as required for the position. Public Law 11-70 requires that all male applicants age 18 to 25 years old must submit documentation evidencing his registration with the Federal Selective Service System. Failure to provide any of the required documents will result in automatic disqualification. The vacancies may require a written and/or physical test. Selected applicants will be subjected to pre-employment drug screening, a 10-year Criminal History Record Check and 49 CFR Part 1542.209(d) Requirements. CPA reserves the right to waive or implement other qualifications to meet its needs. **All applications and required documents must be submitted to either one of the CPA Administration Offices on Saipan, Tinian or Rota (as shown above) no later than 5:00 p.m. ChST on Friday, December 29, 2017.**

For additional information, please contact the CPA Human Resources Office by email at lorna.tenorio@cpa.gov.mp or evelyn.sablan@cpa.gov.mp or by phone at (670) 237-6590 or 6588.

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Orioles star Machado could move to new team

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. (AP)—Baltimore Orioles star Manny Machado could be on the move.

To a new position—or a new team.

Big names emerged in trade talk Tuesday, with Machado, New York Mets pitcher Matt Harvey and Detroit pitcher Michael Fulmer heating up the winter meetings.

And no surprise, the busy New York Yankees are looming, looking to boost a ballclub getting more formidable by the day.

For the moment, no deals for that trio of All-Stars.

"Everything else is—today—moot," Mets general manager Sandy Alderson said of a Harvey deal.

Pitching is always at a premium, and the Chicago Cubs completed two-year contracts for reliever Brandon Morrow and pitcher Drew Smyly, expected to miss next season while recovering from Tommy John surgery.

The Yankees made another trade, too. Nothing close to magnitude of getting NL MVP Giancarlo Stanton from Miami, but nonetheless a deal that could help them very soon. New York sent third baseman Chase Headley, pitcher Bryan Mitchell and $500,000 to San Diego for outfielder Jabari Blash.

"The biggest motivation from our end is it creates a lot more financial flexibility," Yankees general manager Brian Cashman said after dumping a $13 million salary.

That could lead to another starter for the Yankees' rotation, such as Fulmer. The 2016 AL Rookie of the Year was an All-Star last season, going 10-12 with a 3.83 ERA for the Tigers.

A more intriguing possibility, for any club, is Machado.

At 25, he's already a three-time All-Star and two-time Gold Glover at third base. Plus, he's a power bat, hitting 33 home runs with 95 RBI last season.

Machado had an $11.5 million salary last season, is eligible for arbitration and can become a free agent after next year's World Series. That's prompted questions about whether the last-place Orioles can afford him, or if he'd even want to stick around Camden Yards.

Or if they'd be better off trading him to guarantee something in return.

In the meantime, Machado is indicating he'd like to shift over to shortstop. The spot is open, now that J.J. Hardy has become a free agent.

Machado made his big league debut as a third baseman in 2012 with the Orioles and has made 49 starts at shortstop, most of them in 2016 when Hardy was hurt.

Baltimore manager Buck Showalter said Machado has long expressed in interest in playing shortstop.

"Always has, since the day he signed," he said. "To say that Manny and I haven't had conversations about it over the years, I wouldn't be truthful."

"Obviously, we're not there yet, but it's something that Manny—I found that players need to know about that, not February 15th or March 15th. They need to know about it back then—Manny's capable of playing both real well," Showalter said.

Then again, Machado could be playing either spot for some other team. The Yankees would love to slot him in, but no telling whether the Orioles would trade him to an AL East rival.

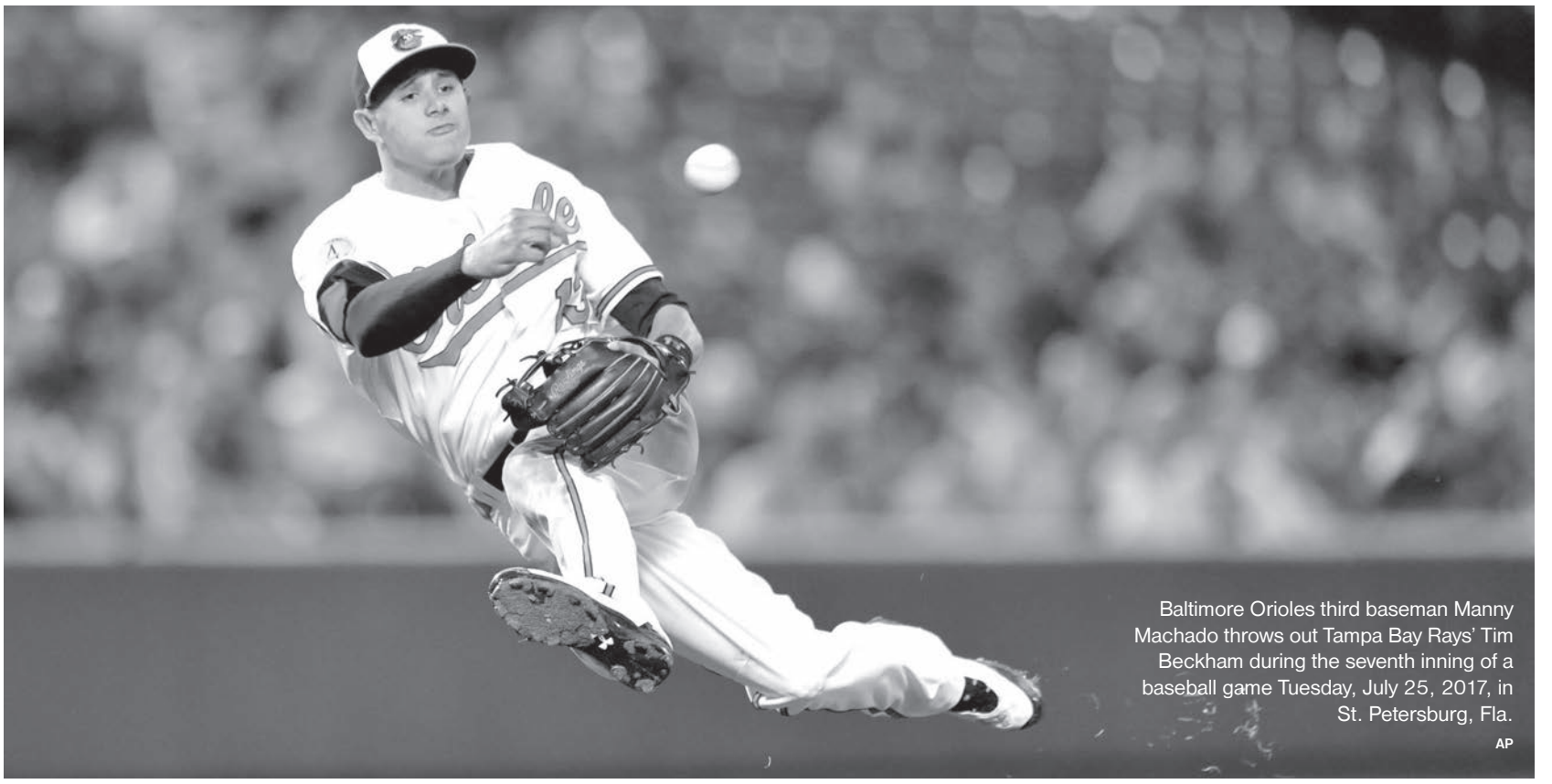
Baltimore owner Peter Angelos didn't get along great with former Yankees owner George Steinbrenner, their animosity ratcheted up after the teams got into a vicious brawl in 1998.

"I've got a real gut feeling about how it's going to work out, but I want to make sure we cover all the bases before whatever direction we go in," Showalter said.

Harvey has come up in Mets' trade talks. Coming off another injury decimated year, this time caused by a stress injury to the scapula bone in his right shoulder, he can become a free agent after next season.

New manager Mickey Callaway and pitching coach Dave Eiland take over a team that is built on starting pitching, provided a rotation that includes Noah Syndergaard, Jacob deGrom, Steven Matz and Harvey can stay healthy. The 28-year-old Harvey was 5-7 with a 6.70 ERA in another injury-filled season for the former ace.

"The most important thing I'm weighing is the opinion of Mickey Callaway and Dave Eiland, and they don't want to lose him," Alderson said.



Baltimore Orioles third baseman Manny Machado throws out Tampa Bay Rays' Tim Beckham during the seventh inning of a baseball game Tuesday, July 25, 2017, in St. Petersburg, Fla.
AP

Angels' Ohtani has a damaged elbow ligament

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. (AP)— New Los Angeles Angels star Shohei Ohtani has a damaged ulnar collateral ligament and underwent a platelet-rich plasma shot in October in hopes of treating the elbow pain caused by it.

Ohtani, the 23-year-old right-handed pitcher and left-handed power hitter who signed with the Angels on Saturday after a frenzied recruiting process, has a first-degree sprain of his right UCL, according to a report dated Nov. 28 and performed by Dr. Masamitsu Tsuchiya at Doai Kinen Hospital in Tokyo.

While a first-degree sprain is the least severe of UCL injuries, further damage could lead to Tommy John surgery, a reconstructive procedure that sidelines pitchers for a year. The shot of PRP, a biologic of centrifuge-spun blood that is used to promote healing, was administered Oct. 20, according to the report, which was distributed to teams after Ohtani entered Major League Baseball's posting system. Ohtani, the report said, "will be most likely available to start his throwing program approximately a month from the PRP." Sports Illustrated first reported that Ohtani had received the PRP shot.

"Although partial damage of UCL in deep layer of his right UCL exists," the report said, " … he is able to continue full baseball participation with sufficient elbow care program."

In addition, a "small free body" floats in Ohtani's elbow near his UCL, according to the report.

The Angels, who did not return a call seeking comment, signed Ohtani for slightly more than $2.3 million and agreed to pay his former team, the Hokkaido Nippon Ham Fighters, a $20 million posting fee in spite of the injury. Elbow damage is fairly common among pitchers, though the use of a PRP shot indicates a further level of concern. It is particularly troublesome for Ohtani because of a strong correlation between fastball velocity and elbow injuries. Ohtani, whose fastball has reached 102 mph, threw only 25 1/3 innings for the Fighters this season after missing most of the year with a strained hamstring. Ohtani's agent, Nez Balelo, did not return a call seeking comment.

On Oct. 12, he underwent surgery on his right ankle, which had hampered him since he injured it during the 2016 Japan Series and through spring training in 2017, according to the report. After the arthroscopic surgery, which removed an extra bone that had developed behind his ankle and a bone spur, Ohtani will need three months until he can return to "full participation of baseball activities," according to the report.

Sounders get salary help, sign Dempsey to new deal for 2018

TUKWILA, Wash. (AP)—The Seattle Sounders will have Clint Dempsey when they try to make it to a third straight MLS Cup final.

Seattle general manger Garth Lagerwey confirmed Tuesday that the club has signed Dempsey to a one-year deal for the 2018 season that will keep the forward with the Sounders while giving the team greater salary flexibility. Having the improved flexibility is important for Lagerwey as the Sounders try to build a roster that can chase a third straight Western Conference title in 2018.

Lagerwey did not get into specifics about Dempsey's deal but did confirm he will be a designated player for Seattle and that the contract is only for 2018. Dempsey's previous contract had a team option for the 2018 season but was more of a hit against Seattle's salary cap.

"Clint worked with us and he's taking less money than he was on before to come back. Still well-paid, well-compensated, but yes we hope long term that creates a little more balance with respect to our (designated player) spend," Lagerwey said.

Lagerwey was already looking ahead to next year just three days after the Sounders stumbled in their attempt to win a second straight MLS Cup title. The Sounders lost to Toronto 2-0 in the final Saturday. By Tuesday, they had to make key roster decisions for moving ahead.

Dempsey was one of the bigger decisions, although a new deal has been expected for several weeks. Dempsey returned from an irregular heartbeat that ended his 2016 season early to lead the Sounders in 2017 with 12 goals in the regular season and three more in the playoffs.

With Dempsey secured and 11 other players with their contract options exercised, the Sounders have 22 players under contract.

Lagerwey said he believes Seattle's roster construction is further ahead of where it was at this point a year ago when the club was celebrating its first MLS title.

"With 22 guys under contract, with more or less a starting 11 on paper in front of us already, I think we've got a really good base," Lagerwey said. "What that does is allows us to make the best possible decision for our club. Will we fill roster spots to fill roster spots? No. Are we honestly ahead of where we were last year? I believe we are because our starting lineup is in a better place, our depth is in a better place. I think we're a better, more sustainable age."

Lagerwey will need a stable roster from the outset next season with the Sounders playing in the CONCACAF Champions League beginning in February.

Mavs spoil Leonard's return with win over Spurs

DALLAS (AP)— J.J. Barea scored 14 of his 16 points in the second half and the Dallas Mavericks spoiled the season debut of San Antonio star Kawhi Leonard, beating the Spurs 95-89 on Tuesday night.

Leonard missed the first 27 games because of right quadriceps tendinopathy, a condition that causes pain and weakness in the knee. He wasn't around in the fourth quarter when Barea finished a rally that he started by scoring eight points in the final 1:49 of the third.

Harrison Barnes scored 17 points while Yogi Ferrell and Wesley Mathews had 16 apiece as the Mavericks ended a five-game losing streak at home to the Spurs, who had a four-game winning streak stopped for the third time this season.

Barea led the Mavericks with six assists, teaming up with alley-oop dunk partner Dwight Powell a couple of times as Powell finished with 12 points and 12 rebounds.

LaMarcus Aldridge had 23 points and 13 rebounds and Rudy Gay scored 21 for the Spurs, who shot 29 percent while getting outscored 28-20 in the fourth quarter.

Leonard, who had 13 points, went to the locker room late in the third quarter, with no immediate word on whether he had hit the unspecified minutes restriction coach Gregg Popovich said would be in place. He played 16 minutes, roughly the first 5 minutes in each of the first three quarters.

The Spurs called a timeout before subbing him out the final time, after he had tipped a loose ball a couple of times to keep an offensive rebound alive and hit a short jumper. He had six rebounds, an assist and a block.

Leonard made his first three shots and scored six of San Antonio's first eight points.

San Antonio has had a similar minutes restriction on guard Tony Parker, who played more than 20 minutes for the first time in seven games since returning from surgery for a ruptured quadriceps tendon.

The 35-year-old Parker had six points on 3-of-9 shooting as the Spurs lost for the first time with him in the lineup. Parker has skipped two games since returning.

Bryn Forbes banked in a 3-pointer over Dirk Nowitzki at the first-half buzzer to get the Spurs within 46-44. Aldridge, Gay and Leonard were the only Spurs in double figures. Patty Mills was next with eight. Pau Gasol went scoreless on just two shots with nine rebounds. Rookie Dennis Smith Jr. missed his third straight game with a left hip strain and won't play on the upcoming two-game road trip. Nowitzki was 1 of 8 from the field and finished with six points.

AP

Antonio Spurs forward Kawhi Leonard, left, looks for an opening to the basket against Dallas Mavericks' Harrison Barnes, right, in the first half of an NBA basketball game, Tuesday, Dec. 12, 2017, in Dallas.

Knicks 113, Lakers 109

In New York, Kristaps Porzingis had 37 points and 11 rebounds, Michael Beasley made the biggest plays in overtime, and the New York Knicks beat the Los Angeles Lakers 113-109 on Tuesday night.

Beasley had 13 points, including the tiebreaking follow shot, and an assist in the extra period as the Knicks went back over .500 at 14-13. Thirteen of their victories have come at Madison Square Garden.

Kentavious Caldwell-Pope scored 24 points for the Lakers, who had won two in a row on their trip. Rookie Kyle Kuzma added 19 points off the bench.

Lonzo Ball had 17 points, eight rebounds and six assists, with a dazzling third-quarter stretch that had father LaVar celebrating wildly from his courtside seat next to Lithuania-bound sons LiAngelo and LaMelo. But Lonzo was quiet after that period beyond two free throws early in OT.

The Knicks essentially won it with Beasley's flurry of a tip-in, a pass inside to Doug McDermott for a basket, and a driving layup that turned at 103-all game into a 109-103 lead with 1:24 remaining in the overtime.

Cavaliers 123, Hawks 114

In Cleveland, LeBron James had 25 points and tied a career high with 17 assists, and Cleveland defeated Atlanta.

James was 11 of 13 from the field, had seven rebounds and was given a standing ovation when he was removed from the game with 2:34 remaining.

Cleveland won for the 15th time in 16 games. The Cavaliers hit a season-high 20 3-pointers, including nine in the first quarter. Cleveland had a season-high 35 assists.

Kyle Korver had 19 points, including six 3-pointers. Kevin Love, returning after missing a game with a hip injury, scored 17 points, all in the first half. Love had 11 points in the first quarter after sitting out Saturday's game against Philadelphia. He had 12 rebounds.

Atlanta fell to 6-21, the worst record in the league. Taurean Prince scored 24 points while Kent Bazemore had 20.

Nets 103, Wizards 98

In New York, Rondae Hollis-Jefferson and Caris LeVert each scored 16 points, and Brooklyn overcame blowing a double-digit second-half lead and took advantage of a costly mistake by Washington in the final seconds.

Brooklyn's Allen Crabbe hit a 3-pointer with 43.8 seconds left to put the Nets up 100-98. Bradley Beal missed a potential game-tying pull-up jumper and Spencer Dinwiddie was then fouled, making one of two free throws to increase the lead to 101-98.

A timeout by Washington advanced the ball past halfcourt, but Tomas Satoransky was unable to inbound the ball in time, drawing a 5-second violation. LeVert then made two free throws with 7 seconds left to seal the win.

Playing at home for the first time in over a week after playing a game in Atlanta and two games in Mexico as the home team, the Nets returned to the Barclays Center and had a total of seven players score in double figures.

Nuggets 103, Pistons 84

In Detroit, Jamal Murray scored 28 points, and Denver handed Detroit its seventh straight loss.

Trey Lyles added 20 points for Denver. Wilson Chandler scored 18 points, and Mason Plumlee had 10 points and 13 rebounds.

Reserves Langston Galloway (18 points) and Boban Marjanovic (14) led the Pistons in scoring. Reggie Jackson was the only Detroit starter to reach double figures with 12 points.

Detroit turned the ball over eight times in the game's first nine minutes, and was down 12 points as a result. Pistons coach Stan Van Gundy went to his bench early, and Marjanovic started a rally with his post offense.

The Denver lead was down to 33-30 when Andre Drummond returned to the floor, but Van Gundy went back to Marjanovic after the Nuggets went back up 44-36 late in the half. Drummond finished with just five points in 27 minutes.

Packers' Rodgers says he's been medically cleared to return

GREEN BAY, Wis. (AP)— Aaron Rodgers has been "medically cleared to return" to action after missing seven games with a broken right collarbone, the Green Bay Packers quarterback announced on Instagram Tuesday night.

Rodgers was hurt during a loss to Minnesota on Oct. 15 and had surgery four days later. He returned to practice on Dec. 2 and is eligible to rejoin the 53-man roster on Friday, which means the two-time MVP could suit up for Green Bay's game at Carolina on Sunday.

"It's been a long road ... but I'm happy to say I've been medically cleared to return," Rodgers wrote on Tuesday night. "Thanks for all the love, support, prayers and well wishes over the past 8 weeks and a big thank you to Dr. (Pat) McKenzie and our incredible training staff."

The Packers (7-6) likely need to win their final three games to make the playoffs.

Rodgers had his collarbone scanned on Monday morning. That afternoon, with the team in the middle of game-planning for Carolina, coach Mike McCarthy wasn't sure whether Rodgers or backup Brett Hundley would be his quarterback.

"I'd like to know as soon as possible," McCarthy said. "Frankly, it's best for Aaron to know as soon as possible. He's the one that has to get ready and, obviously, in his mind he's ready to go if you watch him practice and the conversations with him. But this is a medical decision and Dr. McKenzie is in touch with a number of different medical experts and they're evaluating the information."

Those meetings ran deep into Tuesday before a conclusion was reached.

The Packers were 4-2 in Rodgers' six starts, including the Minnesota game, where he was hurt on the second possession on a hit by Vikings linebacker Anthony Barr. In the three prior games, he threw 10 touchdown passes with only one interception in in consecutive victories over Cincinnati, Chicago and Dallas.

After playing the Panthers, who at 9-4 are in position for the top NFC wild card, the Packers have a rematch against NFC North-leading Minnesota before finishing the season at Detroit. Green Bay's final three opponents have a combined record of 26-13.

The Packers went 3-4 in Hundley's seven starts, including back-to-back overtime wins over Tampa Bay and Cleveland that kept their playoff hopes alive and made Rodgers' return a tantalizing possibility.

"We've got a chance," left tackle David Bakhtiari said after Sunday's victory at Cleveland. "We know what the magic number is. We still have everything in front of us. It's go time."

US Soccer election branded unfair

AP
Steve Gans, one of the nine candidates in the U.S. Soccer Federation's 2018 presidential election, has formally called for an independent oversight of the process.

NEW YORK (AP)—Less than 24 hours before the deadline to submit nominations for the U.S. Soccer Federation's 2018 presidential election, one of the nine candidates, Steve Gans, has formally called for an independent oversight of the process, which Gans believes has not been conducted in a "fair, open manner."

Gans and his campaign team sent a letter, which was obtained by Sports Illustrated, to U.S. Soccer on Tuesday. Gans was the first to declare his candidacy, and since then, the letter states, U.S. Soccer has "displayed neither fairness nor transparency."

Gans pinpointed three rule changes over the past year as examples. One, adopted on Sept. 1, required three official letters of support from a nominating organization for a candidate to join the race. All candidates must submit those letters of support by 11:59 p.m. CT on Tuesday.

Gans last week said that he has the three required nominations. But, with the official list of candidates for February's election set to be confirmed on Wednesday or Thursday, barring delays, Gans called "upon the Federation to bring in independent, professional management to oversee the final two months of the election process."

A U.S. Soccer spokesman said that the actual election, held Feb. 10 at the federation's annual general meeting in Orlando, will be overseen by an independent firm, but clarified that this oversight was always in the federation's plans; it is not a response to Gans' letter. Gans has called for independent oversight of the entire process—which includes a review of all applications by U.S. Soccer's Nominating and Governance committee after Tuesday's deadline.

U.S. Soccer chief counsel Lydia Wahlke responded to the letter from Gans' team, refuting many of the points and accusations. She called the allegations "vague and unsupported," and pointed out that the election regulations are not set by U.S. Soccer staff, but by the Nominating and Governance committee. That committee comprises five elected U.S. Soccer board members, including MLS commissioner Don Garber and outgoing USSF president Sunil Gulati, though Gulati said he had recused himself from all matters relating to the election.

Gans has long been critical of the federation's handling of the election. Speaking to Yahoo Sports back in September, he specifically accused Gulati, the incumbent who last week announced he would not run for re-election, of putting up "roadblocks." At that point, Gans had not received a list of delegates who would vote in February's election. U.S. Soccer, at the time, said it planned to have the list of delegates available on or around Oct. 1.

Gans was indeed provided with the list in October, once he submitted his "list agreement." But, in his letter, Gans said the list was incomplete. U.S. Soccer's response stated that the list, based on rolling AGM registrations, is naturally incomplete until the actual election. According to U.S. Soccer, Gans has received updated lists since the initial release.

Gans, a Boston-based attorney, definitively announced his candidacy in September. The field has since swelled to include former U.S. national team players Paul Caligiuri, Kyle Martino, Hope Solo and Eric Wynalda; Soccer United Marketing president Kathy Carter; current U.S. Soccer vice president Carlos Cordeiro; soccer entrepreneur Paul Lapointe; and New York-based lawyer Michael Winograd.

That nine-person list could be cut down by Tuesday night's deadline if candidates do not have the three required nominations.

Tours to eliminate 2-shot scorecard error for reviews

NEW YORK (AP)—Players no longer will be penalized two shots for an incorrect scorecard if they were not aware of a rules violation when they signed their card.

The USGA and R&A also will no longer respond to most TV viewers' calls during the tournament.

The changes are part of a local rule effective Jan. 1.

Rescinding the scorecard penalty, famously applied to Lexi Thompson at the LPGA Tour's first major last April, is part of a broader standard for using video.

Thompson had a three-shot lead in the final round of the ANA Inspiration when a TV viewer noticed she had improperly replaced her golf ball on the green during the third round. She was penalized two shots for the infraction. Because that would have made her score two shots higher, she received an additional two-shot penalty for the scorecard error.

That became a four-shot penalty in the final hour of the tournament. Thompson rallied, but eventually lost to So Yeon Ryu in the first hole of a playoff.

Leaders from all major tours and organizations began meeting later that month.

The USGA and R&A are leading a group of top officials who are modernizing the Rules of Golf. The proposal currently is under public review and expected to be effective in 2019. The two-shot scorecard error would have been eliminated under the proposed rules.

The USGA and R&A also said only video from the telecast—not smart phones or other video from fans -- can be used as evidence of a violation. It also said it would make it tougher for fans to call in if they think they see a violation on TV.

The change also means each tournament will assign one or more officials to monitor the video broadcast and help identify any violations or rules issues that might arise.

The PGA Tour has done this from time to time, but found that it often loses the use of a rules official on the course as he sits in a room watching TV for a violation that is rare over the course of the year.

According to the video review protocol for tournaments on TV, officials will not monitor or review any calls from views at home. That doesn't eliminate TV viewers from noticing violations—such as the incorrect drop by Tiger Woods at the 2013 Masters—but tournament officials will not have a method for fans to call, email or text.

In the case of the Masters, the viewer was a former rules expert who knew who to call at the course.

FIESTA

From Page 28

win over Lower Base.

Troy Ngirarois stood out in his first game in a Fiesta uniform, as the new recruit scored 16 points, muscling his way inside the paint against the much smaller and lankier frontliners of Shirley's. Four other Fiesta players, who were all part of last year's runner-up team, hit double figures to whip Shirley's. Krisgel Arreza tallied 11 markers, while Fradel Sedillo, Arjay Nonato and Paul Quizon chipped in 10 each.

With Fiesta having too many options on offense, the squad did not even need the contribution of its main gunner Elmer Esdrelon, who saw limited minutes in the team's first game. Ngirarois and company worked together on offense to lift Fiesta to a 33-16 halftime lead. Fiesta was never threatened after that, as only John Jugos stepped up for Shirley's in his failed bid to keep his team afloat. Jugos finished with a game-high 20 points.

Meanwhile, in the last game in the opening day, Dindo Pablo scored Kanoa's last 4 points to help his squad escape past Lower Base.

Pablo had a team-high 12 markers, 10 of them were made in the second half, which started with Kanoa behind by 8, 14-22. Pablo and Sonny Encarna then brought the defending champion back into the game and the former completed the come-from-behind victory with his pair of clutch baskets. Encarna matched Pablo's total output, 8 of them were recorded in the second half.

Ariel Jinang led all scorers with his 16 markers, while Shawn Fujihira chipped in 11.

Second Game

Fiesta 75 — Ngirarois 16, Arreza 11, Sedillo 10, Nonato 10, Quizon 10, Villamena 5, Bernardo 4, Demafelix 2.

Shirley's 48 — Jugos 20, Bordon 8, Anatacio 7, Alonzo 7, Catungal 4, Palma 2.

Scoring by halves: 33-16, 74-48.

Third Game

Kanoa 42 — Pablo 12, Encarna 12, William 8, Sison 6, Lumauag 2, Bata 2.

Lower Base 40 — Jinang 16, Fujihira 11, Echavez 8 , J. Benavente 3, W. Benavente 2.

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felt quite even between the two teams as they played end to end soccer. Movement as a unit improved and individual players were going into their tackles with confidence, allowing the team to regain possession in key areas," he added.

Chelsea HK players tried their best to break the ice and prevent the CNMI bets from getting win No. 2, but the former simply could not penetrate the Teen Ayuyus' defense.

"The Chelsea boys were no doubt just as skilled or better than our boys as they tried to put the ball over our defenders but the unity of the players was tough to breakdown," Zapanta said.

The team manager also noted that no CNMI player got injured during the one-hour match and they were free from cramps. Last Monday, starter Thaiphi Austria had to be relieved in the second half due to a calf injury, while Joshua De Leon is still nursing an ankle injury.

Joshua Abragan, who scored the goal in the Teen Ayuyus' victory over Kitchee, started anew for the squad in their game versus Chelsea and was joined in the first 11 by Tenorio, Manabat, John Michael Rojas, Anthony Fruit, James Ermitanio, Eun Syu Hahn, Hark Galarion, Ryan Relucio, Dai Podziewski, and goalie Christopher Aninzo. Kirt Andon, Joshua Mendez, and Jonathan Capayas were the substitutes.

Meanwhile, the CNMI crew will close out their series of training matches today when they face the All Blacks—an adult team that has players who suited up or are still with Hong Kong's professional squads. Yesterday, the Teen Ayuyus had a team-building and sightseeing activity.

"Our fourth day here was for team building and finally some recreation for the boys. The coaches have devised a race/competition for the boys. With the team in good spirits and I am sure feeling even better at the end of the game against Chelsea, hopefully we can come up with a great result against our toughest opponent in this trip—the All Blacks. We hope to end the camp without a loss," Zapanta said.

CNMI

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were just some bad calls that got them back in the game. Our guys were being fouled, but got no calls," Elias Rangamar told *Saipan Tribune*.

Meanwhile, the CNMI's track team is also done with its competition after Beo Ngirchongor, Zarinae Sapong, and Jamie Pangelinan raced in the 200m run yesterday.

Ngirchongor finished fifth on Heat 2 of the men's 200m race at the Korman Stadium after clocking in at 24.99 seconds. Papua New Guinea's Charles Livuan topped the heat with his 22.02 seconds and also qualified to the semi-final round along with Vanuatu's Steve Lolten, who submitted 22.27 seconds.

Samoa's Kelvin Masoe (22.19 seconds), PNG's Nazmie Lee Marai (22.35) and Theo Piniau (22.05), Vanuatu's Bandy Mento (22.50) and Bradly Toa (22.33), and Fiji's Aaron Powell (22.02) were the other semifinalists.

In the women's 200m preliminary races, Sapong was also ranked fifth on Heat 1 after recording 26.65 seconds. She missed the cut in her heat by just one notch, as the Top 4 in her group advanced to the next round. PNG's Toea Wisil (24.90 seconds) ruled Heat 1 and was followed by fellow qualifiers Serenia Raqatu of Fiji and Vanutu's Lyza Malres and Christelle Kalopoing, who timed in at 25.85 seconds, 26.20, and 26.65, respectively.

Pangelinan was on Heat 2 and finished sixth after registering 29 seconds. The Cook Island's Patria Taea (24.64 seconds) topped the heat and was joined in the semifinals by PNG's Afure Adah (25.00) and Leon Beu (25.95), and Vanuatu's Judithe Alatoa (26.81).

Only one day is left in the athletics competition and two more in the entire event. New Caledonia still leads the medal tally with its 41 gold medals, 14 silver, and nine bronze. PNG (26-19-18), Fiji (19-17-18), Samoa (15-11-5), and Vanuatu (12-23-17) round up the Top 5.

9th Annual TanHoldings Tennis Classic

PHOTOS By ROSELYN B. MONROYO

Robbie Schorr returns to Moris Villanueva during their men's open singles title game in the 9th Annual TanHoldings Tennis Classic held early this month at the Fiesta Resort & Spa Saipan court.

Moris Villanueva makes a backhand return to Robbie Schorr.

Isabel Heras gets ready to serve during her and Tania Tan's women's doubles 4.0 game against Japan's Otobe Mizuyo and Chie Sato.

Tania Tan, right, and Isabel Heras exchange high-fives after scoring a point against Otobe Mizuyo and Chie Sato.

Guam's Jacob Jackson hits a shot back to Saipan's Anthony Gregoire during their boys U12 singles finals match.

Coume Kaga prepares to serve against sister Conatsu during their third place match in the girls U18 singles.

Anthony Gregoire watches his shot to Guam's Jacob Jackson.

Sam Ryu makes a baseline return during his and Richard Steele's boys U14 doubles game against Chris Kim and Seung Won Lee.

Orioles star Machado could move to new team

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Mavs spoil Leonard's return with win over Spurs

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Two in a row for Teen Ayuyus

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Coach Michiteru Mita gives instructions to the CNMI Boys U18 National Team players during the halftime break in their training match against Chelsea FC Soccer School Hong Kong U18 last Tuesday night at Tuen Mun Sports Ground in Hong Kong.

The CNMI Boys U18 National Team made it back-to-back following a 2-0 triumph over Chelsea FC Soccer School Hong Kong U18 last Tuesday night at Tuen Mun Sports Ground.

Starters Sunjoon Tenorio and Sebastien Manabat scored against Chelsea FC to hand the Teen Ayuyus another win. The visiting team edged Kitchee Sports Club U8, 1-0, last Monday night at the Mong Kok Stadium for a good start in their five-day, three-training match camp in the former British colony.

With just a day to recover after a tough match versus Kitchee and prepare against another highly competitive team in Chelsea FC U18, the Teen Ayuyus surprisingly had lots of gas left on their tank to win their second training match.

Manabat put the CNMI on the board in the 34th minute after he sent a hard cross in the penalty box and the shot was deflected by a Chelsea defender and went into the goal. Tenorio made it a 2-0 count nine minutes later as he battled a Chelsea player for the possession and won the fight en route to scoring past their opponent's goalkeeper.

"The match started on a high note and ended even higher with our consecutive win. I would say the team is much more confident, trust among the players is growing on the pitch and it reflected in their play," team manager Ruselle Zapanta said.

"The boys were moving the ball much better, building up play from the back and trying to create chances moving forward. Possession of the ball

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CNMI misses playoffs in Mini Games 3x3

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

The CNMI bowed out of competition in the 3x3 event in the 10th Pacific Mini Games after dropping its last two games.

Jack Lizama, Preston Basa, Dan Barcinas, and Douglas Schmidt lost to the Solomon Islands last Tuesday night, 2-9, and then fell to the Cook Islands, 12-16, yesterday morning at the Korman Stadium's Hall 2 in Port Vila, Vanuatu. The Commonwealth cagers finished the round-robin elimination with a 3-5 record and missed the cut. Only the Top 8 squads advanced to the single-elimination playoffs.

The loss against the Cook Islands was a heartbreaker for Team CNMI, as the squad was still ahead by 4, 12-8, with a little over two minutes left when their opponents got the breaks in the game and pulled off the win.

"We had our chance against the Cook Islands, but there

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CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
A Solomon Islands defender, right, keeps a close eye on a Fiji player during their men's 3x3 game in the 10th Pacific Mini Games last Tuesday night at the Korman Stadium's Hall 2. Both Fiji and the Solomon Islands defeated the CNMI, which bowed out of competition yesterday after losing to the Cook Islands.

Contrasting wins for Kanoa, Fiesta

ROSELYN B. MONROYO
Fiesta Resort & Spa Saipan's Paul Quizon, center, is double teamed by Shirley's Coffee Shop's Isaiah Bordon, left, and Jess Nicdao during the second quarter of their game in the TanHoldings caging last Saturday at the Gillette Multipurpose Gymnasium.

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

Last year's finalists Fiesta Resort & Spa Saipan and Kanoa Resort won their debuts in the 2017 Tan Holdings Inter-Company Basketball League in contrasting fashion last Saturday at the Gillette Multipurpose Gymnasium.

Fiesta, which bowed to the twice-to-beat Kanoa in last season's finale, eased past Shirley's Coffee Shop, 75-48, to start its campaign on a positive note. Kanoa, on the other hand, pulled off a come-from-behind 42-40

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